JOSSEY-BASS TEACHER

GRADES 6–12

The Writing Teacher's ACTIVITY-A-DAY

180+ Reproducible Prompts and Quick Writes for the Secondary Classroom

MARY ELLEN LEDBETTER

5-Minute FUNDAMENTALS

JOSSEY-BASS TEACHER

Jossey-Bass Teacher provides educators with practical knowledge and tools to create a positive and lifelong impact on student learning. We offer classroom-tested and research-based teaching resources for a variety of grade levels and subject areas. Whether you are an aspiring, new, or veteran teacher, we want to help you make every teaching day your best.

From ready-to-use classroom activities to the latest teaching framework, our value-packed books provide insightful, practical, and comprehensive materials on the topics that matter most to K–12 teachers. We hope to become your trusted source for the best ideas from the most experienced and respected experts in the field.

The WRITING Teacher's ACTIVITY-A-DAY

180+ Reproducible Prompts and Quick Writes for the Secondary Classroom

Mary Ellen Ledbetter

JOSSEY-BASS
A Wiley Imprint
www.josseybass.com

Published by Jossey-Bass
A Wiley Imprint
989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741—www.josseybass.com

Jossey-Bass books and products are available through most bookstores. To contact Jossey-Bass directly call our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-956-7739, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3986, or fax 317-572-4002.

Jossey-Bass also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ledbetter, Mary Ellen.
The writing teacher's activity-a-day: 180+ reproducible prompts and quick-writes for the secondary classroom / Mary Ellen Ledbetter.
p. cm. -- (Jossey-Bass teacher)
ISBN 978-0-470-46132-7 (pbk.)
1. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching (Secondary)—Activity programs. I. Title.
LB1631.L3385 2000
808'.0420712—dc22
2009036530

Printed in the United States of America
FIRST EDITION

PB Printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK DIFFERENT

As I travel to classrooms across the United States and Canada, I see an increasing need for quick, original, student-friendly activities that can be used as engagement strategies, extended to a day's lesson, or become the basis of a mini-unit.

Teachers want strategies that will focus student attention and at the same time address the needs of district and state curricula. These ready-to-use exercises provide writing models so that students will understand the necessary components of the final products.

The format of the book provides teachers with a quick reference to effectively incorporate the writing, reading, and grammar skills presented into their own classrooms.

Because these lessons can be graded orally (calling on three or four students or partners per day until a grading column is full), *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day* will quickly become a teacher's best friend. When higher-level thinking, process, and product are expected every day, lifelong learning occurs.

- *Short writing examples* on any skill or in any mode are hard to find. One of the most time-consuming parts of a teacher's preparation is finding samples that appeal to students. The activities provided in *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day* make the teacher's job much easier.
- Research proves that most writing assignments that fail do so because students do not have *models on which to base their own final products.* The writing samples and exercises in this book are designed to instill *confidence* in students so that they feel they can be *successful in any writing-on-demand situation.*

- Most books for writing teachers do not use writing samples to teach *language arts terminology*. The book is unique in that it is a collection of, for the most part, paragraph-length material that *integrates writing, grammar, and reading strategies*.
- Some activities even provide *step-by-step approaches to producing multi-paragraph essays,* turning what is usually perceived by students to be an intimidating process into a much simpler, easy-to-accomplish task.
- *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day* serves a variety of uses: *Engagement exercises* (warm-ups), bases for an *entire period's lesson*, and approaches to *mini-units*.
- All of the lessons are *easy-to-access activities* that can be used *at any point in any curriculum*.
- The activities are *student-friendly exercises* that can be used as *individual, partner,* or *whole-class assignments*.
- The format of the book allows for oral assessments in stages, to provide *immediate feedback* to student writers so that revision can occur *during the process,* rather than after the final draft, when these strategies are too late.

How to Use the Sample Writings

The *short sample writings* that make up most of the assignments have several purposes:

- Research has shown that students need to study examples of good writing every day to analyze the components and synthesize what makes the piece exemplary. Even if the teacher chooses only to *read the pieces aloud and discuss the various aspects of the writing* **(such as structure, elaboration, voice)**, learning has occurred.
- The activities require that students take a more active role in their reading by *applying a skill to the writing*. When there are multiple activities, teachers are free to choose *just one question*, thus using the skill as an **engagement activity**, or *all of the questions*, broadening the **scope of the lesson**.

The *longer pieces* can be used in several ways:

- *Essays in all modes* are broken down into *manageable parts* **(such as introduction; first, second, and third bodies; and conclusion)** and can serve as an introduction to that form of writing.
- The multiparagraph essays can provide a *quick review* of a mode just covered in class or serve as a reminder of *certain types of writing that may appear on state tests*.
- Essays in all modes are easy-to-understand *examples on which students can base their own multiparagraph writings*.

How the Book Is Structured

The book is alphabetized by literary and compositional terms so that teachers can readily incorporate the exercises into their lesson plans as called for by their districts' curricula.

The grammatical terms are used as they apply to writing, not in isolation. For instance, the section on action verbs asks students not to simply identify the verbs but rather to concentrate on how action verbs are used as one method of elaboration in writing. This strategy enables students to see the connection between the use of grammar and the skill of writing.

Activities focused on specific literary or reading terms present students with examples of these methods in a short piece of writing, which not only gives students practice in identifying literary vocabulary but also allows them to study how the same skills can be a natural part of their own writing. For instance, when students study the conflict section, which is divided into internal and external conflict, they simultaneously see the terms at work in an established piece and project how these same terms will apply to their own writing.

Smiley-Face Tricks (Voice)

Smiley-Face Tricks are being used in schools across the country as a concrete way to conquer the abstract concept of *voice*. Countless teachers have testified to the success their students have had using the "tricks."

The quality of students' writing improves dramatically, and students not only use the tricks in their writing but identify them in literature as well. These stylistic devices are in the book separately in alphabetical order, but having them together as a ready-to-use handout **(with different examples)** makes it even more convenient for teachers.

Smiley-Face Tricks

The name in parentheses credits the student writer of each example.

1. *Magic Three*. Three *groups of words*, usually separated by commas, that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point, especially when the three word groups *have their own modifiers*.

   I am the *water* when the land turns stale with dryness, the *curve* when everything else is straight, and the only *human* in a world of aliens (Jerad).

2. *Figurative Language*. Nonliteral comparisons—such as similes, metaphors, and personification—add spice to writing and can help paint a more vivid picture for the reader.

   His fancy car ran *like a hummingbird* on a warm, silent day (Chris).

3. *Specific Details for Effect*. Instead of general, vague descriptions, *specific sensory details help the reader visualize* the person, place, thing, or idea being described.

   During our hunting adventures, boring, brown sticks would become *rifles*, my miniature poodle would turn into a *fierce hunting dog*, and teeny ant hills would grow before our eyes to *monstrous mounds* of dirt. We would travel through the *knee-high grass* that *tickled our legs like spiders*. When there was a *slight breeze*, we would take cover because we believed with all our hearts that it would soon become a *horrible hurricane* named Hunter (Samantha).

4. *Repetition for Effect*. Writers often *repeat specially chosen words or phrases* to make a point, to stress certain ideas for the readers.

   I *never* played Peter Pan and flew to Never-Never Land. I was *never* Cinderella getting ready for the ball to dance the night away with

Prince Charming. I was *never* Jane waiting for Tarzan in our tree hut (Catherine).

5. *Expanded Moment*. Instead of speeding past a moment, writers often emphasize it by expanding the action.

> I stare off into the heavens
> while my math teacher tries to
> explain to the class something
> about inverting and multiplying
> I wonder why I would do that
> when I like adding and subtracting
> just fine
> My mind is nowhere close to room 134
> Instead I'm closer to the clouds
> the ones that look like marshmallows
> jet-puffed marshmallows
> I stare again
> this time at the teacher
> with her one beady eye
> the teacher who screams at us
> if our eyelids happen
> to flutter closed
> like butterflies
> I blame the parents
> They're the ones who sent her
> to the planet Earth (Megan)

6. *Humor*. Professional writers know the value of laughter; even subtle humor can help turn a "boring" paper into one that can raise someone's spirits.

   You, yes, you Justin, were the guilty one who, while I took off my shoes to enjoy the hot pavement in early spring, put a frog in them. I didn't *look* at my shoes when I put them back on. *It was the squish that gave your plot away* (Elizabeth).

7. *Hyphenated Modifiers*. Sometimes a new way of saying something can make all the difference; hyphenated adjectives often cause the reader to sit up and take notice.

   It was one of those *please-don't-make-me-go-to-school* mornings (Sharlene).

8. *Full-Circle Ending*. Sometimes students need a special ending, one that effectively *wraps up* the piece. One trick is to repeat a phrase from the beginning of the piece.

   All the neighbors thought Aunt Matilda a little strange. They had thought so when she had first moved in and was seen chasing Luna moths over the rooftops at night in her dressing gown. There was a touch of madness in her beady, black eyes, and she had long ago given up even trying to appear sane. She was friends with all the policemen in the town, since not a day went by without somebody calling to complain about Aunt Matilda's rattlesnake collection. The police had gotten to know her quite well, and they loved her wrinkled face and toothless smile. She spoke of them as "my boys," and they all had a lovely relationship. They were the ones who helped her out of the pond in back of her rundown mansion when she fell in and discovered the alligators. They didn't even arrest her. *On second thought, maybe not everyone thought Aunt Matilda a little strange* (Bart).

Oral Assessments: Grading

Most of the activities in this book can be graded using the ''Oral Assessment'' technique explained in this section. Teachers could choose to grade the multiparagraph essays and even some of the one-paragraph essays as a major curriculum requirement, perhaps reading them while conferencing with the students. No papers at home!

Oral Assessment

Benefits: To ensure that students are *successful with all components of an essay*, teachers need to *call on every student at least once* to read aloud whatever part of an essay or paper will help the teacher's assessment and the class's learning and will give the student writers immediate feedback.

Environment: If the teacher sits at a *student desk in front of the room*, he or she becomes part of the *learning community,* struggling for that perfect phrase just as the students are doing.

Grading: The grade book can be open and used for *daily grades*. Every grade does not have to reflect the value of 100. The importance of the grade can be achieved by weighting the denominator. For instance, a daily grade might be worth 30 points, whereas an essay for which the entire creative process takes two weeks to complete might be assigned 500 points.

At the end of the marking period, all the possible points are added to designate a ''perfect'' score, each student's points are added, and these points are then divided by the possible points to ascertain the student's grade.

Models: Remember that students should have *several models*. The *process* of reading the essays as a class and then *breaking the works into their parts* **(for example, introduction, first body)** will give students a clear picture of the desired final product.

Procedure: For a *five-paragraph essay*, for instance, the following could be considered:

1. Introductions: After the teacher and students have written for five or ten minutes on the introduction, the class stops and the teacher reads his or her own introduction to the class.

   a. The teacher can then call on perhaps three students to read their entire introductions, giving them their grades as they do so. If something is wrong **(for example, the piece is missing a hook or the thesis statement is incorrect)**, the teacher can consider allowing the student's classmates to receive *extra credit* for explaining what needs revision. More learning occurs if the teacher does not mark the student writer down, but instead gives the writer a few extra minutes to revise while another student reads. *This way, the entire class benefits by hearing the components.*

   b. Next, several other students might read *only their hooks*. The class can discuss whether these attempts to grab a reader's attention are strong enough and exemplify voice. The teacher should then give students who have read their hooks their *daily points*.

   c. Finally, a few students can read their *thesis statements*. The *three aspects* that their papers will address should be evident and expressed in *parallel structure*. Points go to these students as well.

2. Bodies:

   a. Depending on the grade and ability level of the class, *ten or twenty minutes* should be allowed for writing each body, which means that students will probably be able to write and revise *only one body per period*. **(Teachers should stress that a body should be about a ''spread hand'' in length in order to include three points and elaboration.)**

   b. Again, teachers should read *what they have written*.

   c. Teachers should call on *no more than three people* to read their entire first bodies. If more read, the class becomes inattentive. If a student who is called on to read says that he or she is not finished, teachers can simply tell the student to *read what is completed* so that they can be assured that the student is headed in the right direction. The rest of the rough body, then, needs to be finished as homework.

d. Next, teachers might call on several students to read their *topic sentences* to make sure that the subject matter of their first paragraphs is clear.

e. Several more can be called on to tell the class what their *three points* are **(for example, their reasons, the subpoints of the paragraph)**.

f. Finally, others can read several of their *best Writing Trick examples*.

g. Grades are given for all.

3. Conclusion:

a. The conclusion is graded in the same manner as the introduction, with several students reading their *entire conclusions*, a few more with their *attention-getters* **(or their attempts to leave the readers with a good taste in their mouths)**, and some others reading the *restatements of their thesis*.

b. With students sharing various parts of their essays, the whole class benefits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Ellen Ledbetter is a national presenter for the Bureau of Education and Research (BER), a consultant for her own company (MEL'S Pen, LLC), and the author of more than a dozen books. Some of her publications include *Writing Portfolio Activities Kit; Writing Research Projects Activities Kit; Ready-to-Use English Workshop Activities; Something for Every Day; You Say, I Say; Writing on Demand: Grades 7–12;* and *Writing on Demand: Grades 3–6*, published by Jossey-Bass, Prentice Hall, and the Bureau of Education. Ms. Ledbetter received Goose Creek's Board of Trustees' Bell Award for Outstanding Teacher in 1995, 1997, and 1998 as well as BER's Award for Distinguished Teaching and Outstanding Contributions in 2001. She has been an educator for over twenty years in public schools in Michigan and Texas and an instructor at San Jacinto College. Her curriculum work, classroom teaching K–12, and teacher training take her across the United States and Canada, where she is known for raising state test scores as well as for her Smiley-Face Tricks, which are a concrete way for students to conquer the abstract concept of voice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All my books are dedicated to my parents, who instilled in me my love of words.

A special thank-you goes to my cousin, Katharine Ferris, for her intelligent input as well as her patience, listening to anything and everything at all hours.

Erin Jones, an instructor at University of Arkansas, not only has been my writing buddy and dear friend but has given her opinion on various aspects of this book, serving to make it even more reader-ready.

Finally, I'd like to express my appreciation to administrators, teachers, and students I meet as a consultant who inspire me and allow me to be part of a writing community across the United States.

CONTENTS

Action Verbs as a Method of Elaboration

Action verbs are methods of elaboration, ways to help writers *make a point* in their writing.

EXAMPLE:

> *Mama taught me how to be a lady*. One of her most important rules was not to *pick* at myself or my clothing, at least in public. When I was a child, if any part of me *itched, ached, burned,* or generally felt the need to be *scratched, rubbed, blown on*, or *tickled*, I *learned* to *shift* my weight ever so nonchalantly as I *sat* or to *recross* my legs—at the ankles, like a lady—or to *perform* any number of secret maneuvers to *relieve* these untimely annoyances.

☞ **NOTE:** The author has used *dashes*, which are considered a sophisticated form of punctuation; these are used as a type of *parenthetical insertion,* an *interrupter*.

ACTIVITIES

1. Begin your writing with a *topic sentence*, as in the example. Use at least *five action verbs* to make your point.
2. After five minutes, pass your writing to a neighbor, who will *underline your action verbs* and check to determine whether they were used as *support for your topic sentence*.

Adages

An *adage* is a saying expressing a *common experience* or *observation that can be used as an allusion or reference to make a point in writing.* To let the reader know that the author is aware of the familiar usage, a phrase such as "as the adage goes . . ." acknowledges this to the reader.

EXAMPLES:

A watched pot never boils.

No man is an island.

Beggars can't be choosers.

One rotten apple spoils the barrel.

Cold hands, warm heart.

Practice makes perfect.

Don't cry over spilt milk.

Rome wasn't built in a day.

Easy come, easy go.

Slow but steady wins the race.

Finders keepers, losers weepers.

Too many cooks spoil the broth.

Good fences make good neighbors.

Variety is the spice of life.

Haste makes waste.

When it rains, it pours.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.

Knowledge is power.

Little pitchers have big ears.

Misery loves company.

ACTIVITY

1. List at least *three other adages*.
2. Choose three adages and in your own words *explain their meaning*.

Adjectives as a Method of Elaboration

Adjectives **(words that modify nouns or pronouns)** are another method of elaboration.

EXAMPLE:

On Sundays Albert and Louise would drive along Galveston's seawall to Sixty-Fourth Street. Once there and parked at the spot where the pier joins the shore—the car having grown somehow unbearably *stifling* in the *afternoon summer* sun or uncomfortably *cool* in the *gray December* haze—Albert and Louise would walk down the *forty-three concrete* steps to the sand. Louise would spread out her blanket and open the hamper filled with *creamy* potatoes, *crisp, golden* chicken, *hot, steamy* coffee, and—oh, yes—ladyfingers as *delicate* and *sugar-coated* as the dream they nurtured.

"December" is usually a noun, but in this case works as an *adjective* modifying "haze."

☞ Notice that "sugar-coated" is *hyphenated* because it works as a *compound adjective* modifying "ladyfingers."

ACTIVITY

☞ The example *paints a picture for the reader* with the help of adjectives. If the writer had not used adjectives, the reader might have wondered *what kind* of *sun* and *how many* and *what kind* of *steps*, and wanted some details about the food.

Write for five minutes, describing a scene familiar to you that the readers can envision, using *five adjectives* to help you elaborate. Pass your writing to another student, who should draw the scene. If you have written clearly, readers should be able to sketch what they "see."

Adverbs as a Method of Elaboration: Practice #1

An *adverb* (a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb) is another method of elaboration for writers.

☞ Adverbs *should be used sparingly*, as it is better to use a *vivid verb* than a weak verb coupled with an adverb.

EXAMPLES:

> *"Now!"* our squad leader yelled to our platoon. It was time to infiltrate enemy territory, and "terrified" wouldn't begin to describe our feelings.
>
> *"Now"* was the one word that hung *heavily* in the air.
>
> I couldn't help thinking that I had misunderstood. Maybe he had said *"Soon"* or *"Tonight"* or *"Tomorrow"*—better yet *"Yesterday"* or *"Never"* and the deadly deed would be behind us or not have existed at all.
>
> But there it was again—that one word.
>
> *"Now!"* the voice boomed as we crept *stealthily* forward.

ACTIVITY

Write a short vignette containing *dialogue* using at least *five adverbs.*

☞ *Keep in mind the following rules for dialogue:*

a. Begin a *new paragraph* for each new speaker.

b. Be sure to put *quotation marks* around the dialogue.

c. *Capitalize* the first word of what is said.

d. *Punctuation marks* go inside the quotation marks, with a few exceptions; for example:

- Did you say ''I'm ready''?
- ''Be prepared'': those were the words they lived by.

e. If a *speaker tag* is used **(for example, she said)**, generally use a comma to separate it from the dialogue. Exception: when the speaker tag is a complete clause, use a colon; for example:

Karen added her two cents: ''This won't happen without support from management.''

Adverbs as a Method of Elaboration: Practice #2

Just as any other part of speech, *adverbs* can be used to *support the tone* of a piece.

EXAMPLE:

> "*Constantly*, I'm telling you, that's how often my dweeb of a big sister talks on the phone to her 'crushes.' I could barf." Cindy was almost in tears as she confided her feelings to her best friend, Crystal, about the appendage suddenly attached to her sister's ear.
>
> "Well, what do you mean by 'constantly'? Do you mean *frequently, non-stop, intermittently, often, repeatedly, again and again, over and over, time after time, every once in a while, usually, continually, steadily, uninterruptedly, incessantly, unceasingly, perpetually, habitually, persistently, recurrently, chronically, repetitively,* or—"
>
> "Never mind," Cindy *abruptly* interrupted Crystal, and she *suddenly* hung up.

☞ This example is obviously an attempt to be humorous by listing all the possible synonyms for a particular adverb.

ACTIVITY

Write a "spoof" using *a play on adverbs,* as in the example.

☞ You may find a *thesaurus* helpful for finding new word possibilities to convey your intended meaning; however, never use a word whose meaning or connotation you do not know.

Allegory

An *allegory* is a story that can be read at the *literal level* or the more *symbolic level*, in which the characters, settings, events, and so on have a *broader meaning* and *provide a universal lesson.*

EXAMPLE:

Claudia swung her croquet mallet with a vengeance. She always won, but on this one never-to-be-forgotten day, Claudia missed her winning shot.

She threw her mallet aside and turned to me as if she were going to pull my pigtails or give me a knuckle rub or worse—maybe even hit me. She put her face as close to mine as possible and hissed, ''Well, my dad can beat up your dad!'' And with that she turned tail and strutted away.

I had been struck—not with her fists or even her words—but with the truth. As it began to rain, I sank to the ground and realized right then and there on the Piersons' front lawn that Claudia had taken with her something more important than the loss of the game or even an abeyance of our friendship. She had stolen my innocence.

My valedictorian daddy, my idol, could indeed fall physical victim to her dad, who barked commands to his children and wife from his beloved recliner. This ''man'' could indeed beat my daddy to a pulp.

I knew that what Claudia's dad could do wasn't important. I realized even then that the way in which he could ''best'' my daddy was just as insignificant as the man himself. Still, sadness washed over me, as a sudden burst of thunder cracked in the distance.

ASSIGNMENT

One interpretation of the meaning of the allegory is *brains versus brawn.* Find symbols in the vignette to support this theme.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of *initial consonant sounds* in successive or closely associated words.

EXAMPLE:

Daddy sits in his study with his legs propped precariously on his desk—ankles crossed, glasses mid-nose—all the while making meticulous marginal notations in his thermodynamics book that he has chosen for pleasure. Pleasure—oh, please! If I weren't here to defeat the math monster that lurks everywhere I go, I would choose from a myriad of mysteries or run rampant in the fields of romance or even find myself heehawing at the prospect of humorous books. That's me, though, not Daddy. Daddy is deadly serious about his magical mathematics.

I sit next to him, ready for my tutorial—my own legs crossed Indian-style.

Daddy presents problem #1 on my homework as if it were a work of art and I should be glad to be in its presence. That done, he returns to his reading, leaving me alone to ponder the possibilities, to posit a theory, to postulate, as Daddy says.

It seems like hours as I twist and twirl a long, blonde strand of hair around and around my right index finger, trying desperately to call forth the math muse to calculate the answer to problem #1.

ACTIVITY

1. Circle all the words that are an example of *alliteration*.
2. Write a short piece, using at least *six examples* of alliteration.

Allusion

An *allusion* is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or something recognizable from the culture of real life.

EXAMPLES:

1. It was just thirty seconds until school let out for the summer. I glared at the clock and mentally whined the way *Lucy Ricardo whined to Ricky that she wanted to be in the show*. I inaudibly yelled at the clock like *General Custer yelled at his troops at the Little Bighorn right before he lost his battle,* as I was about to lose mine. I could see, though, that it really didn't matter how much I begged and pleaded and threatened the clock to show its *Carl Lewis* side and run me to Liberty. Apparently this clock didn't believe in liberty or anything right in our nation (Jennifer).

2. So what if Georgia hadn't had *Breakfast at Tiffany's* that morning with *Audrey Hepburn*? So what if she wasn't *Cyd Charisse, Singin' in the Rain* with *Gene Kelly*? So what if she wasn't *Scarlett* in *Gone with the Wind*, *Rhett* at her side? She was who she was. Georgia Smith, not *Georgia O'Keeffe*. She was just an average, all–*American Pie* girl.

ACTIVITY

Write at least fifty words using at least *two allusions*. You could model yours after the first example, which is a *moment in time,* or the second, which is a *short character description.*

Analogy

An *analogy* is a comparison of points of likeness between two dissimilar things.

EXAMPLE:

It's one of those fresh, dew-on-the-ground mornings, the sun making its early spring appearance as I sink more deeply into the plush pillows of my sofa, coffee cup in one hand, novel in another. I realize, seeing the buds already pushing their way through branches, that my annual no-holds-barred spring cleaning is not far away. Looking out my front porch windows, I know that these panes of glass will be my first task, as always. Studying them more closely, I notice something else, something I have never seen: a connection, perhaps, between cleaning and learning.

Now, for instance, the view of my world is blurry, obstructed by a winter's worth of the elements. Soon I will be wiping this glass, making long, strong sweeping motions that will allow me to take it all in, this newly opened world that will bring the best, the most beautiful to me—as education does, my reading shedding new light on things.

Maybe there *is* something there—a connection between educating the mind and the simple satisfaction of physically cleaning windows. Both let me see my worlds, my life, with a clear view. Both require work on my part—whether strong, swift movements of muscle or equally strong, swift movements of mind. New viewpoints are the prize—whether studying robins in trees or spring coming alive on the page. Who would have thought in this early spring morning that my books and my windows could hold the same fascination?

ACTIVITY

Make a quick list of ways in which cleaning and education are alike.

Anecdote

An *anecdote* is a short incident used as a *method of elaboration*. It is used as an example of a point, giving further proof or information.

EXAMPLE:

Marci wasn't quite sure when the ritual started, but it was always the same. Her father would be driving, and she would put her feet up on the passenger-side dashboard, shoes and all—heels, flats, boots. It didn't matter. She would close her eyes and let her right hand ease its way to the familiar path of the reclining lever of her seat. This was done with no words, as a punctuation mark of sorts—a period or an exclamation mark. She realized with increasing sadness that this act replaced conversation that father and daughter could have had. Instead, there was only silence.

Scientifically, there must be a name for something that wedges itself between two objects or, in her case, people. Marci could see the wedge, draw it in her mind even, but could not name it. Really, though, what did the name matter? The whatever-it-would-be-called was sharp and confident and knowing. It was her friend. What *did* matter was that this was her way of distancing herself from her father.

ACTIVITY

Underline the *things Marci does* or *descriptions* the author uses that *elaborate* on the main point—Marci's feeling of being distant from her father.

Antagonist

An *antagonist* is anything *that stands in the way of the protagonist*. Usually an antagonist is a person, but it can also be something more abstract **(for example, nature, society, and so on).**

EXAMPLE:

I had just gotten the shoes the week before—dark brown lace-ups like Tiny Tim's in *A Christmas Carol*. My feet encased in their stiff prisons, I knew exactly how Tiny Tim must have felt, but then it wasn't *his* first day of seventh grade, and *he* at least had the excuse of a limp and a crutch. My ugly shoes couldn't have been more glaringly opposite from the stylish, feminine slippers or penny loafers the other girls wore.

I had figured that I would make the best of it. They were just shoes after all.

There, though, down the hall was Suzanne Beady, her hand drawn up to cover her mouth, as if what she was whispering to another girl—whose hand was in the exact same position as Suzanne's—was a national secret of some sort, so top secret that five adolescent fingers and a rudely cupped palm were required to intercept the offending air waves lest the enemy detect the message.

Her hand might have hidden her words, but somehow the object of Suzanne's ridicule was apparent.

ACTIVITIES

1. Underline clues that make Suzanne the antagonist.
2. Write a *Quick Write* (a five-to-ten-minute write) about an antagonist in your life.

Application and Synthesis

Application and synthesis are the *highest forms of thinking,* in that the process proves that authors not only know the *definition* of a term but also can *synthesize* the information, proving its *relationship to their lives.*

EXAMPLES:

1. ***Figurative Language:*** I am a whirlwind, stirring up everything in my path.
2. ***Inference:*** Someone could infer that I don't like a comment when I roll my eyes.
3. ***Prediction:*** Since math is my weakness and I didn't study for the test, one can predict that I will make a low grade.
4. ***Conflict:*** I wish I were as smart as Daddy **(internal)**. When I lived in Michigan, I longed for Texas weather **(external)**.
5. ***Symbolism:*** The credit card my parents gave me in case of emergency symbolizes their trust in me as a responsible young adult.
6. ***Appositive:*** Judy, my I'm-there-for-you girl, is my best friend.
7. ***Pronoun Usage:*** Just between you and me, Mr. Brown gets on my nerves.
8. ***Subject-Verb Agreement:*** One of my friends is giving me a birthday party, but it's supposed to be a secret.
9. ***Subjunctive Mood:*** I wish I were good at math.
10. ***Verb Forms:*** After Daddy laid my books on my desk, I lay on the bed to rest before my life as I knew it would be over.

ACTIVITY

1. Choose three literary terms and write sentences applying them to your life.
2. Write three sentences, applying three grammatical rules **(from different categories)** to your life.

Assessing Prompts: Determining Mode of Writing

Writers must at times "write on demand" to a *prompt*. The first step is to determine what *mode* is called for—or which one will *suit the topic the best*. Knowing the *"language"* used is essential.

EXAMPLES:

Persuasive: (Give the reasons someone should ______, Debate, Prove, Say what you think, Argue for or against, Convince, Agree or disagree, What ______ needs is ______)

Expository: (Explain, State what ______ means to you, Give examples, Illustrate, Define)

Narrative: (Tell about a time, Give an instance, Describe an incident ______, Relate an experience ______, Write a slice-of-life)

Compare and Contrast: (Advantages and disadvantages, Good and bad points, Similarities and Dissimilarities)

Descriptive: (Describe, Characterize, Recall a scene, Tell about images, Write a character sketch, Paint a picture)

ACTIVITY

For the following *prompts*, determine which *mode* is indicated:

Describe three pictures that you keep that are symbolic of your life.

What are the benefits of silence?

Tell about the best adventure you have had.

Agree or disagree that merciful lies are necessary.

Write about a lesson you have learned.

Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of similar or identical *vowel sounds*.

EXAMPLE:

Of course, I was in love with John—or so I thought at the ripe old age of sixteen. Of course, he was the most handsome, most athletic, the absolute smartest boy in our class. Of course, I thought forever was ours.

One summer afternoon as we sat on Mama's purple velvet couch, our bare feet stretched out between us, John grabbed my right big toe as if it had suddenly burst into flames and he was there to put out the fire.

Before I could wonder what he was doing, he blurted out, "There's hair! There!" He further continued to study my foot as if it were a lab specimen, something we all might be asked to dissect in Mr. Dismuke's class.

I was mortified. All I could muster was a whispered, "*Hair? Where?*"

"There. On your big toe. I swear." Then John looked from my big, apparently hairy toe to my eyes, as if they held the secret of Hairy Foot.

I snatched the offending appendage from his grasp to get a better look for myself. He was right. Long black hairs sprouted from the area below the joint on my toe. What could I possibly say to my romantic boyfriend? That I don't care about the hair, the hair there? As I held the strange foot up in the air, all I could do was stare.

ACTIVITY

Underline the words that are examples of *assonance*.

Autobiographical Collage

An *autobiography* is a *story of a person's life written by him- or herself.*

☞ One way that this can be accomplished in class is to make a "memoir" of sentences that describe the author in collage form. When they are read as "pieces," the reader begins to understand the nature of the person.

1. I like walking backwards so that I can see where I have been.
2. More adults should jump rope and yell, "Red Rover, Red Rover, let Carrie come over!"
3. I won't swat a fly because it could be my great, great, even-greater-than-that Aunt Bertha.
4. When someone puts someone down, I want to help him back up.
5. Sleep is the best—I can fast-forward, pause, or rewind.
6. I've always wanted to be a cat to stretch out all day in that one special shaft of sunlight.
7. I simply lift my feet and fly to another planet when I hear words like, "I told you so!"
8. When I'm upset, I read a book and become any character I choose.
9. My mother told me when I was a child that practicing balancing books on my head would make me look regal and chic; I still do it.
10. Every day that it rains I sing along with the new song.

ACTIVITIES

1. On unlined paper, using different colored pens, make a "collage" of your beliefs.
2. Trade papers with a class member who will write a short sentence about what your collage says about you.

Biography

A biography is a written account of another person's life. In the example, key facts about the profiled person are italicized.

EXAMPLE:

Other kids were raised on SpaghettiOs and overdoses of mindless TV to give their parents just a slice of normalcy. Winn, though, was nurtured like some kind of rare hothouse plant—a hybrid of his *divorced parents*. When Winn was a boy, *his mother would bandage her son from afternoon scuffles* with love and tenderness.

As Winn grew older, he remembered every *adage* that had become sort of household mantras: *"To thine own self be true," "Walk a mile in someone's shoes," and "Accept the things you cannot change and change the things you can."*

Winn quickly learned to keep these gifts a secret, as other boys had not shared his experience. When Winn was busy learning the importance of *individuality and focusing on a goal* while at the same time being empathetic to those less fortunate, other boys seemed bent on destruction.

The miracle of it all, though, was that in high school, his classmates listened. He was elected *president of the student council* and *Most Likely to Succeed*, and was a respected member of the *honor society*. Winn's senior year, he decided that he *would become an attorney*, one who would echo the voice of the people and help them rewrite their life stories. He would provide his own form of bandages and share a few adages along the way.

ACTIVITIES

1. Interview a classmate, gathering at least *ten facts* about his or her life.
2. Write a biography including the facts and embellishing when needed.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the act of *spontaneously jotting down ideas* in preparation for various aspects of writing. Some prove to be useful; others can be discarded.

EXAMPLE:

In preparation for writing a persuasive essay, for example, the writer might make a list of possible ideas for the prompt "What the World Needs Is ______."

1. Honesty
2. Trust
3. Enthusiasm
4. Empathy
5. Courage
6. Self-Motivation
7. Respect
8. Camaraderie
9. Discipline
10. Forgiveness

ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm ten possible ideas for the prompt "What Is Your Biggest Fear?"
2. Choose your favorite idea to add to a class list, thus demonstrating the many possibilities brainstorming can provide.

Brainstorming: Web

Webbing or *outlining* is the process of *"thinking ahead"* about the construction of an essay. Writers who make a *brief web or outline* of their intended work have a more complete picture of *main points* and *elaboration* before the actual rough draft stage begins.

☞ Many writers often have trouble with the main points that become the topics of the essay's bodies (body paragraphs). One method is the five W's: *who, what, when, where, why* technique.

EXAMPLE:

Who: (society, relationships, self)

What: (money, need, extra benefits)

When: (past, present, future)

Where: (school, home, extracurricular places)

Why: (beauty, relaxation, fun)

ACTIVITY

Using the following quotation, *web three main points* that an essay with this prompt could have. **(Note: Use one of the "W's" but not necessarily the parenthetical examples that follow them in the preceding list.)**

> I needed a new kind of *courage*—not the kind it takes to stand up and speak, but the kind it takes to *sit down and listen.*
>
> —Winston Churchill

(Continued on next page.)

Brainstorming: Web Subpoints

(Continued from previous page.)

EXAMPLE:

The following *web* contains an example of three main points and three subpoints for the *preceding prompt:*

Who Do You Listen To?

School	**Home**	**Future Job**
Teachers	Parents	Bosses
Friends	Extended Family	Coworkers
Own Inner Voice	Neighbors	Clients

ACTIVITY

Write three *main points* **(using one of the W's)** and three *subpoints* for the following quotation:

> Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind . . .
>
> —Robert Louis Stevenson

Business Letter

A *business letter* requires a heading, inside address, salutation, body, closing, and signature.

1869 Bayou Blvd.
Mesa, AR ______
August 15,______

Nike
1500 Weistheimer
Houston, TX 77523

Dear Sirs:

I would like to return my Nike 2000 Series set of golf clubs that I purchased four months ago. The salesman at Golfsmith assured me that my driving, long irons, mid-irons, short game, sand shots, chipping, and pitching would dramatically improve with the flexibility provided by the titanium shafts.

According to the instruction manual, I have followed all the necessary steps. I practiced the fundamentals of interlocking and overlapping grips, the proper alignment of my stance, and the initiation swing back to the ball with the correct movement of my hips. All this was obviously to no avail, as my handicap went up from 25 to 30.

It was my sincere goal to be on tour with Nationwide, Hooters, or Tight Lie by the end of the summer before moving on to the PGA. Obviously, the effectiveness of your 2000 Series clubs needs to be reevaluated, as does your guidebook.

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I will be expecting full reimbursement within the month.

Sincerely,

Panther Woods

ACTIVITY

Obviously, this is a humorous, absurd letter. As instructed by your teacher, do a *ten-minute Quick Write business letter* with either a serious or humorous tone.

Character Sketch

A *character sketch* is a short piece that paints a picture of a person for the reader. The work may use various methods of characterization: *appearance, actions, environment, inner thoughts and feelings, speech,* and *what others say.*

EXAMPLE:

Her voice rings out like thunder—thunder followed by lightning if her wishes, her commands are not heeded.

"Son," her voice crackles and whips as if it were on fire, as if it could singe anyone who gets in its way, who interrupts its sure, steady flow, "you'd better get busy on your bibliography cards, or you'll be staying after school with me, and don't think you won't!"

Only deathly quiet resounds throughout the library now.

Having put the young man in his rightful place, she turns to another student, as soft as a gentle rain this time. This time, she works patiently with a struggling girl. No anger, no reprimands, nothing but words of encouragement are whispered to this student.

"Here, sweetie, let me show you . . . " And her voice trails off like a breeze that has decided to take its delicate winds somewhere else now that their job is done here, here in this place of learning.

This librarian, this natural force, is a two-sided coin—thunder mixed with lightning and yet gentle rain.

ACTIVITY

Write at least fifty words of your own explaining what the librarian is like.

Characterization: Actions

The *actions* of a character that the author chooses to include should be *indicative of the character's nature*, ones that help the reader fill in the ''sketch'' that the writer is verbally ''drawing'' of a person.

EXAMPLE:

For one whole year Uncle Fred tried to teach me ''The Bells Are Ringing'' on Grandma Wilson's piano in our living room. That was it—just one song. Plunk, plunk, plunk my lead fingers would strike the keys, which would respond not with melodious sounds resonating throughout the house but with groans, moans, sighs. I was a failure. Uncle Fred knew it. I knew it. Even the piano knew it. Of course, we never realized how my wild, unceasing slashing at the blacks and whites might be wearing out our musical welcome, how we might be getting on Daddy's nerves. Uncle Fred, though, continued with the perseverance of a general directing a wayward army of one. I would hover over the keyboard, pumping away at the pedals, and Uncle Fred would sit in the straight-back needlepoint chair drawn up beside me. As usual, he bent over me so as to redirect my fingers at every mistake, and, believe me, plenty of redirecting was always part of the agenda.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Write an adjective you would use to describe the narrator. Now underline actions that support your choice.
2. Do the same for Uncle Fred.

Characterization: Contrasting Actions

Sometimes authors use *contrasting actions* to *show,* not *tell* the reader the *difference* between two characters.

(Continued from previous page.)

> Then, without warning, Daddy appeared, scooted in beside me on the velvet bench, positioned his hands over mine in such a way that it became clear he wanted mine to drop aside for a moment, and proceeded to play not only the by then infamous litany of ringing bells but everything from ''Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue'' to Rachmaninoff's ''Prelude in C-Sharp Minor.'' He then lit one of his unfiltered Camels, closed the keyboard, stood up, and walked down the hall to his study.
>
> I had never even realized that he knew how to play, except it made sense, his mama teaching piano lessons when he was a boy. And you had to know Daddy. He didn't do it to show off or to best his beloved only child. I saw right away that when you've got all that way down deep inside you and someone's banging away like they've never even heard of rhythm, day after day, right down the hall from where you're studying your physics or your calculus or your light particles as they relate to speeding bullets, when you've been subjected to all that, you just want to hear it done right. Just once. That's all.

ACTIVITY

Write an adjective to describe the narrator's father. Underline the actions that prove your theory.

Characterization: Appearance

One method of characterization is to describe the *appearance* of a person.

EXAMPLE:

> Maybe it was because *someone* had to lift the massive objects from the pickup truck, and Virgil was always on hand. Or maybe it was all that chinning and monkey-climbing and rope-swinging Virgil and his brothers did all the time—like any kids passing long, hot days together. Or maybe it was just time for Virgil to grow up.
>
> Whatever the reason, Virgil sported—in what seemed to all of us an amazingly short time—a set of biceps. Like fast-forward photography, one day Virgil, the boy, stood by the side of the road, waiting on the bus, kicking stones, digging in the soft earth alternately with the toe then the heel of his well-worn western boots, and the next day we drove by someone else completely. This new person was wearing one of the three shirts Virgil owned, Virgil's boots, and Virgil's rebellious attitude. It was Virgil all right, but Virgil—the man—his short-sleeved, blue-and-white checkered shirt rolled up past arm muscles and unbuttoned to reveal a chest usually reserved for men.

☞ Sometimes an author combines several methods of characterization, as the above paragraph has, using actions as well but to a lesser degree.

ACTIVITY

1. Underline clues in the description that prove *Virgil has turned from a boy into a man.*
2. Discuss other *specific details* the author has used that give the piece *voice.*

Characterization: Environment

The *environment* of a character is another method of revealing his or her personality.

EXAMPLE:

At home, when Joe was a kid, his dad used to listen to the radio while the family was having their meals. On their oilcloth-covered table at his dad's end was his dad's prized possession—his radio.

No one spoke on those cool summer mornings, the Sears lace curtains blowing in a little with the breeze. Actually, no one ever spoke at this table in this house. Actually, no one ever spoke in this house much at all—except maybe Joe's dad to bark out orders.

Joe's dad was only happy at meals if everything was where it belonged—in his house, on his table, next to his radio.

And that was the thing, the radio.

It was the radio that started Joe's days, where he'd hear of the thirtieth annual, open-to-the-public tent revival at the Bay Swamp Baptist Church, or he'd learn of blackberries for sale at 898-4982, where the announcer assured Joe, "The man didn't say no price."

Sometimes in between the voice on the radio, telling of a full-size solid oak bedstead for sale and a small dining suite at 89 . . . something-or-other, Joe wished with all his heart that he would—just for once—have his father's attention. After all, Joe had so much to say.

ACTIVITY

Partnering with a class member, underline *aspects of Joe's environment* and explain what each description means in terms of Joe's upbringing.

Characterization: Inner Thoughts and Feelings

First Person

A character's *inner thoughts and feelings* are expressed in either *first-person* pieces or *third-person omniscient point-of-view* pieces, which give the readers insight to which they would not normally be made privy.

EXAMPLE:

> I wasn't thinking when I turned left down the eighth-grade science hall instead of right to my own destination—the seventh-grade English wing. The only explanation as far as I can tell—now that I look back—was that I was concentrating on Mrs. Swift's pronoun usage test. Just as I was mentally regurgitating the uses for the objective case, I saw them—my best friend Nicki and my boyfriend Scott. She was at his closed locker, and they were laughing and holding hands, obviously oblivious to anyone and everything.
>
> Some other kind of girl would march right up to the dynamic duo and POW! That would be that. Some other kind of girl would pretend-trip in front of them, let herself be swept back to her feet by the two people she loved, and watch the look of guilt take its many forms.
>
> All this girl could do, though, was to turn around, walk to class, and think of pronouns.

ACTIVITY

Think of *three adjectives* that could be applied to the narrator and quote passages from the example to support your opinion.

Characterization: Inner Thoughts and Feelings

Third Person Omniscient

EXAMPLE:

As Edith waited in the lounge at the hospital, she was wondering if she could ever be beautiful. She imagined what it would be like if a man like Dr. B.—her father's handsome young doctor—would ever ask her out. She pictured him gliding up in some bright red sports car, rushing to the passenger door as if this simple act were the one thing he had waited all his life to do, and holding her hand as she slid daintily into its leather bucket seat. He would thoughtfully tuck the hem of her white linen sundress into the car and push a strand of her long, loose hair up under her wide-brimmed straw hat. Edith knew that men like this, and sports cars, and linen sundresses, and wide-brimmed hats were reserved for other girls—the beautiful ones—not for Edith. She let her mind hold the dream one last time before she walked briskly down the hall.

ACTIVITY

For each example, underline the *thoughts* that give the reader a clue to Edith's personality. Then write an *adjective* that would represent each character.

Characterization: Speech

A *character's speech* can indicate his or her personality: educated or uneducated, formal or informal, friendly or bitter, and so on.

EXAMPLE:

''My hands, I've never known what to do with them.

''I'm a-hopin' nobody can't hear my words with that there picture-takin' man tryin' to take my phoh-toh-graph. That's why I'm a-whisperin' them real soft and gentle like so maybe you can hear me in heaven, Mama.

''But see, Mama, you always said to put my hands in my pockets or fold them in my lap or hold my purse in front of me, but I ain't got no pockets and he got me a-standin' and he done took my purse away so it's like my hands are birds or something. I can feel they want to fly, lift right on up over my shoulders and my head, right on out of this place, Mama.

''I just seen him a-lookin' my way. I'm a-gonna be more quieter.

''I'm gettin' tired of a-standin' up here now, Mama, and my hands are achin' for me to let 'em loose, but I'll try to keep 'em steady. I'll try, really I will.''

☞ The quotation marks aren't closed at the end of each paragraph because the same speaker is still talking.

ACTIVITY

1. Read the piece aloud a second time *without the dialect.*
2. Partner with a classmate and together create a character *through his or her speech.*

Characterization: What Others Say

What others say about a character or some other aspect of the story can be true or not, depending on the *motivation of the speaker.*

EXAMPLE:

"She throws a ball like . . . like . . . like a . . . girl," Phil sputtered out through picket-fence teeth that waited not so patiently for braces. His face had turned so red that I wondered if it were possible for him to explode—or implode—due to my sports inability.

Just as I was contemplating this scientific phenomenon, just as I was wondering how to phrase the questions tomorrow for Mr. Phillips, my science teacher, Lyn, Phil's sister, chimed in with, "And her hair, I mean what's up with the braids and the bows and those butterfly barrettes?"

I couldn't help but notice that Lyn's face assumed the same I-can't-believe-what-I'm-seeing expression that her brother's had only moments before.

As I was wondering if maybe I should cut my hair to resemble Lyn's I'm-a-girl-trying-to-fit-in-with-the-guys look, Kim, the youngest of the pack, spoke up. "Who cares? She's adopted. She doesn't have a real daddy and mama, and Auntie isn't her real aunt and Katharine isn't her real cousin."

Kim, too, took on a demeanor that made me want to sic old Duke, the family dog, on her. She'd be his bone to chew, and I was ready to watch.

"Adopted. Adopted. Adopted," the threesome chanted in some crazy singsong way.

ACTIVITY

From what is *said about* the narrator, list *five adjectives* that could apply.

Clichés

A *cliché* is a word or phrase that has been used so many times that it *lacks originality*. Sometimes student writers use them as a *simile* or just a *handy phrase*; however, *clichés should be avoided in writing*.

EXAMPLES:

A: An open book
B: Busy as a bee
C: Cute as a button
D: Dead as a doornail
E: Easy as pie
F: Faster than a speeding bullet
G: Going from bad to worse
H: Happy as a lark
I: In the nick of time
J: Jump for joy
K: Keeps going and going like the Energizer Bunny
L: Live and learn
M: Money talks
N: Nose out of joint
O: One in a million
P: Pencil thin
Q: Quiet as a mouse
R: Red as a beet
S: Stupid as the day is long
T: Tried and true
U: Under the weather
V: Vast unknown
W: Winter wonderland
X: "X" marks the spot
Y: You can tell a zebra by its stripes
Z: Zero in on the problem

ACTIVITY

Pair with another student and make your own *list of clichés* for every letter of the alphabet.

Climax

The climax of a narrative—which usually occurs near the end—is the turning point or the point at which the tension or suspense is at its height.

EXAMPLE:

Belinda Rogers suddenly appeared out of nowhere, swaggered up to Samantha, and made some comment about her hair. Belinda Big Mouth laughed and pointed and generally made the fool out of herself that we all knew her to be by harrumphing, ''Hey, you, you should go home and start over with that mop on your top. Maybe even use a brush and a mirror this time.'' Of course, this was said in Belinda's usual ain't-I-the-funniest-person-on-the-planet way.

As Belinda was turning away, certain in her triumph, Samantha voice-slapped Big Mouth back with, ''Well, I *could* start over, but then mine might end up looking like *yours*—and talk about Ugly's mama!''

I like that in a person—the ability to turn a put-down upside down. Well, Samantha turned herself around—knotty hair and all—threw her mass of curls and tangles and snarls over her shoulders, breezed past all those other old girls, and swished right into school.

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss with a partner what you think the *climax* is and *why*.
2. Write a *narrative vignette* in five ten minutes, in which the *climax* is apparent.

Choppy Style

Choppy style is a series of short sentences that are similar in construction. The way to correct this type of writing is *sentence combining.*

EXAMPLE:

He was a track star. He was not an ordinary track star. His legs were like bands of steel. They were also muscular. They never stopped. They kept going. They went on and on. His arms were strong. They were brawny. They resembled pistons. They were like pistons pumping. They were trying to keep up the momentum. His legs were setting the momentum. His strides took him distances. Not many other athletes could compete with him. He could compete with the gazelle. He could compete with the cheetah. They are the swiftest of animals. His shoes must have been magic. They must have had wings on them. He moved gracefully. He moved like he was running on air. Beads of sweat rolled down his chest. They rolled down his neck. They tried to find a way to cool down his body. His body would be cool when he won.

ACTIVITY

Eliminate the choppy style by rewriting the paragraph, combining the sentences to make the writing flow.

Commas

Individualized Practice #1

ACTIVITY

Write *original sentences* that satisfy the following requirements. Be sure to punctuate your sentences correctly and *label any added element* **(for example, simile, hyperbole, adjectives).**

1. A *direct address* using your English teacher's name and a typical request.
2. An *introductory phrase or clause* involving what you are going to do after school and containing a *simile.*
3. An *address* requesting that a manuscript be returned to you at school; use your name, your school's name, your school's street, your city, your state, and your zip code.
4. A *compound sentence* that shows a contrast between you and your best friend.
5. A *date* containing the day of the week, month, and year that you were born.
   ☞ Make sure that you do not end the sentence with the year; give more information after the year so that you can prove that you know how to punctuate a sentence in which the year is not the last word.

☞ Your teacher may call on three students to read their sentences—complete with comma placement—for an oral grade.

Commas

Individualized Practice #2

ACTIVITY

☞ Follow the same instructions as for Practice #1.

1. An *appositive* about a family member containing a *metaphor* and at least two *adjectives*.
2. A *series* listing three places you'd like to visit, each place described with *at least a five-word phrase*.
3. A *direct quotation*—write two sentences, one statement said by you to your best friend and the other your best friend's response.
   ☞ Remember paragraph rules for dialogue, and don't forget to include a speaker tag (for example, Brenda said) for each.
4. An *interrupter* in a sentence that discusses a recent movie and that contains a *hyperbole*.
   ☞ Remember that when writing a movie title, you underline it (or if you are word processing, *italicize it*).
5. An *introductory word* followed by the titles of three books you have read.
   ☞ Remember the rules for capitalizing and underlining or italicizing titles of books.

☞ Your teacher may call on the remaining members of the class to read their sentences for an oral grade.

Comparison/Contrast Essay

Introduction

A *comparison and contrast essay* gives the similarities or differences, advantages or disadvantages, or good or bad points about a subject.

Requirements: Hook and Thesis (with points to be covered)

EXAMPLE:

> Mr. Brown scans the room for practical jokers, which he realizes could be *all* his students. Obviously someone is having a good hee-haw at Mr. Brown's expense. Signed up as lab partners on frog dissecting day are the two most opposite girls in school—Ellie and Erin. It's like Princess Di meets Rocky Balboa. **(Hook)** The girls' *dissenting actions and speech* are obvious, but they are united in their desire *to pass science class.* **(Thesis with Three Points)**

ACTIVITY

After you have *brainstormed your topic* and made a *web* of similarities and differences, write an *introduction* for your own paper that has the stated requirements. Mark the elements **(that is, the hook and thesis containing three aspects to be discussed)** as this example shows.

Comparison/Contrast Essay

First Body: First Part of Contrast/Comparison of Actions

Requirements: Topic Sentence **(including first point)**; Three Subcategories; Elaboration and Voice

EXAMPLE:

[Before class even begins, Ellie's and Erin's *polar-opposite actions* have made Mr. Brown reach for the Excedrin.] **(Topic Sentence)** *Ellie flounces* into the room, her Ralph Lauren outfit perfectly pressed and perfectly matched to her boys-will-never-dare-to-kiss-these pink lips. When she *spies the frogs*, splayed out in all their glory, her *nose begins to twitch* as if she had been deposited smack-dab in the middle of a toxic waste dump. If that's not enough of a flurry, *her hands begin to flutter*—in her "ladylike" way—like she might be trying to ward off the desire to throw up, or maybe she's trying to use her hands, then her arms as skinny little propellers to launch herself skyward, anywhere out of the vicinity of this science room. Or maybe she's hastily trying to remember a spell to cast to remove her from such a noxious environment. She *dabs at her forehead* with a monogrammed linen handkerchief as perhaps a last resort before the paramedics are called.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

Analyze Ellie's *actions* and the *elaboration* and *voice* the author uses to paint a vivid picture of this girl.

☞ **NOTE:** Erin, Ellie's counterpart, is discussed on the following page.

Comparison/Contrast Essay

First Body: Second Part of Contrast/Comparison of Actions

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

☞ **NOTES:** Erin's actions would be included in the same paragraph as Ellie's, because the topic sentence is about the difference between the ways the girls conduct themselves. The author presents the picture of Ellie before proceeding to Erin.

Erin, however, enters the room *as if she's stalking prey*—human or otherwise. She *hikes up her cargo pants* that are laden with chains and keys and anything else she can strap to herself. Her *dark, dirty hair hanging in clumps receives a rough brush-through* with a wide-toothed comb, but the hair refuses any help and resumes its business of framing a face free of makeup but a surprisingly beautiful face, a fact that no one has wanted to broach with Erin. When she *focuses on the source of the commotion* and realizes that it is the vapid Ellie once again, she *rolls her eyes and marches onward*. Though when she catches a glimpse of the frogs, *she seems to light up all over*. *She inhales deeply, smiling all the while*, as if she were in a field of lavender rather than one of formaldehyde. She sits on her stool and *fingers the shiny scalpel*.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

Study this part of the paragraph in the same manner. Write your own *first body,* making all your *subpoints* and *elaboration* work toward the goal stated in the topic sentence.

Second Body

(Continued from previous page.)

[Once Ellie is seated as well, Mr. Brown braces himself for the *verbal onslaught*.] **(Topic Sentence)** Ellie turns to Erin and whispers, *"Is that a dead frog?"* One question that doesn't deserve an answer apparently isn't enough for Ellie, as she leans into Erin and conspiratorially pleads, *"You'll do the actual, well, the actual whatever it is that we have to do, won't you? I've just had my nails done and besides I don't think I could, well, actually touch any of this."* Erin would like to respond with, *"Most definitely, since it's been about all my life since my last manicure,"* but she grits her teeth instead. When Erin actually *does* speak, she informs little Miss Priss that "*Yes, I'll make the Y-shaped incision to open things up. Then I'll locate the heart, which will be a fist-shaped blob slightly to the left. And then I'll . . ." Ellie goes as pale as Marley's ghost*, while *Erin's color is almost luminescent*.

☞ **NOTE:** Writers almost always *change paragraphs for new speakers*; however, this time *both girls' speech support the topic sentence* of how different the two girls are.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Study how the author has revealed even more of the girls' personalities by their *speech.*
2. Write your *second body,* concentrating on *details that support your topic sentence.*

Comparison/Contrast Essay

Third Body

(Continued from previous page.)

[So far Mr. Brown has been pleased that things have progressed without his having to call for help—after all, *both girls want to pass his class*.] **(Topic Sentence with Thread)** *Ellie's grades have always been good*. Her parents hired tutors for every class, and there is a mile-long waiting list of boys who hope to be Ellie's before- or after-school "helpers." Ellie's motivation in school is based on her one and only desire—retaining her head cheerleader position. *Ellie needs Mr. Brown's approval*, and if it means working with Erin, well, things could be worse. How, though, Ellie doesn't know. *Erin,* on the other hand, *has always breezed through her school work*, her parents having been told by the school early on that *her IQ is "off the charts,"* but none of this matters to Erin. She has to *pass Mr. Brown's class* with *the highest grade, as she always does in all her classes*—no matter what. It's a little game she plays with herself, and why let this Ellie-girl interfere in the slightest? Actually, Ellie might up the ante, provide a perverse sort of entertainment. Whatever, *both girls have the same goal*.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Study the paragraph for the *details illustrating the similarity* between the two girls.
2. Write your own *third body*.

Comparison/Contrast Essay

Conclusion

Requirements: Attention-Getter and Restatement of Thesis (and three points)

(Continued from previous page.)

[Even before Mr. Brown's actual lecture begins, he realizes that he shouldn't have worried. He knows that Ellie will always have her I-am-a-princess actions and speech, just as Erin will always wear her metaphorical boxing gloves. Even the poor frogs can see something this obvious.] **(Attention-Getter: Full-Circle Ending)** [Even though *Ellie and Erin are polar opposites in the way they conduct themselves and in what they say*, they both *need to pass* Mr. Brown's class.] **(Restatement of Thesis)**

ACTIVITY

1. Study the *attention-getter* and how the author uses a *full-circle ending*.
2. Write the *conclusion* for your own paper.

Conflict: External

External conflict is a struggle between two or more *contrary forces.*

I made my way down the hall, past the graffiti-covered lockers, past the groups of girls gossiping about whatever junior high girls talk about when they're bored or in love or anxious to exact revenge on some unsuspecting victim. When I finally passed *his* friends, I tried to figure how I'd get his attention, how I'd make him notice me. Just as I was running through a seemingly endless list of possibilities, he walked up to me.

"So, Sue, want to go to the Valentine's dance Friday night?" That was it. Simple as A-B-C; 1-2-3; Red-Rover-come-over.

He talked. To me. He asked me out. And to the dance.

I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move. My lips were glued shut. What should I say? All I could do was make my eyes meet his and formulate the very first words I would ever utter to him, "Uh-huh."

That was it.

That is, until Carrie Johnson waltzed right up to us, slipped her arm around my dreamboat's waist, and said, "What are you doing with *her*?"

She didn't know it, but that one question was the battle cry that began the war.

ACTIVITY

1. Write at least fifty words explaining how this is an example of *external conflict.*
2. Or write an example of an external conflict in your life.

Conflict: Internal

An internal conflict is a struggle within a character.

Some boy-man
waltzes over to me
stretches his hand out
like it's a rainbow
and I'm the sky or something
all glittering
and you know
well
up there
and he longingly
looks at my
Rocky Road ice cream cone
like he wants a bite
and I'm like
shattering
inside
cause he's
obviously full of hopefulness
but, hey,
I'm not stupid
I'm hungry
so I turn away
from boy-man
just in time
to see his hand
fall back in place
all rainbow-like

ACTIVITY

1. Analyze the *form* and *content* **(how it is an example of internal conflict)** as well as the *language* of this poem.
2. *Write a free verse* **(nonrhyming)** *poem* that illustrates internal conflict.

Connectives

Connectives are *transitions* that give the reader a clue that the author is *changing subjects, linking ideas*, and generally writing a *smooth, cohesive paper*.

EXAMPLES:

Also
Another
Besides
By contrast
Conversely
Finally
First
For example
For instance
Furthermore
However
In addition to
In conclusion
In particular
In spite of
In the same manner
Likewise
Moreover
Nevertheless
Next
Not only
One example or For example
One method or way
On the contrary
On the other hand
Similarly
Specifically
Then
To illustrate
Yet

ACTIVITY

Do a five-minute Quick Write using at least three of the listed connectives.

Connotation or Denotation

Connotation is the emotional associations that a word has—as opposed to *denotation*, the dictionary definition. Connotations can be *honorific* **(good)**, *neutral*, or *pejorative* **(bad).**

EXAMPLE #1: OBSEQUIOUS

1. *Denotation:* characterized by or showing servile complaisance or deference
2. *Connotation*: pejorative
3. *Explanation*: To be called *obsequious* implies that one is fawning or subservient.
4. *Opposite connotation:* dutiful

EXAMPLE #2: LUCID

1. *Denotation:* easily understood; intelligible
2. *Connotation:* honorific
3. *Explanation:* If a person is described as being *lucid*, his or her explanations could also be said to be rational or sane.
4. *Opposite connotation:* obscure

EXAMPLE #3: ABODE

1. *Denotation:* a place in which one resides; dwelling; habitation; home
2. *Connotation:* neutral

3. *Explanation:* An *abode* could be anything from a hut to a mansion, which makes it neutral.
4. *Synonym:* residence

ASSIGNMENT

Using *three vocabulary words*, complete the following assignment:

1. Give their definitions.
2. State whether you think the words have positive (honorific), neutral, or negative (pejorative) connotations.
3. Explain your reasoning in complete sentences.
4. List a word that would be opposite in connotation. If the word is neutral, list a neutral synonym.

Definition as a Method of Elaboration

Not only are *definitions* sometimes necessary for the reader to *understand certain aspects* of a piece, but the act of defining and giving examples can also serve as a *method of elaboration.*

> Mrs. Bradley knew—felt in her very bones—that Rachel would once again win a gold medal in the National Scholastic Writing Competition, but something had to be done. The girl had written a *roman à clef*, characterizing all of her classmates so expertly that anyone who knew any of them could point a finger at the unsuspecting Rachel and say, "That's me! Who gave you the right to tell what I told you in confidence?" Or "You've got Winston down to his pocket protector, high-waters, and taped glasses. Bet he'll be mad!" Or "My father's attorney will be in touch with your father's attorney."
>
> No one would ever question Rachel's talent; however, now she had based her "fiction" on *real, easily recognizable people.* Rachel had included every don't-tell-anyone escapade everyone had secretly gotten away with since first grade. If anyone found out—especially the parents—the whole class would be grounded for decades.
>
> The story would have to be rewritten using fictional characters pulling off anything-except-what-her-real-classmates-had-done shenanigans. Then and only then would Mrs. Bradley be able to breathe again, and then and only then would Rachel win yet another gold medal.

ACTIVITY

Write at least fifty words in which you *define a term* for readers.

Definitions: Specialized

Sometimes writers need to *define specialized terms* so that their readers will understand the piece.

EXAMPLE:

Roger had never liked math, and he wasn't too fond of Mrs. Hatchet either. He had the annoying habit of thinking that everyone—but him—lived and breathed the intricate mathematical concepts that seemed to comprise Mrs. Hatchet's life.

The very first day of school Mrs. Hatchet covered the board at a maniacal speed with what Roger considered hieroglyphics. *"Tangent = making contact at a single point along a line, touching but not intersecting. Cotangent = the complement of a direct angle or arc."*

On and on the terms and their definitions went until Roger felt a dull headache begin at his temples and magically work its way to the back of his neck. Every possible equation then took shape on Mrs. Hatchet's board, and every student dutifully copied each. Hands popped up like kernels of corn in a microwave bag, the owners of the hands being his I'm-so-smart-I-can't-stand-it classmates.

Roger's hand never went up that day, but after he had dug deeply that night for the buried treasure, the definitions of the terms that Mrs. Hatchet had said they would learn tomorrow, Roger was finally able to manipulate the magical numbers. From that day on, math and Mrs. Hatchet seemed a little less annoying.

ACTIVITY

Write a five-minute Quick Write including *one definition of a specialized term.*

Denouement

The *denouement* is the part of a narrative that comes *after* the climax. Its purpose is to *pull things together, to explain events.*

EXAMPLE:

> That year Miss Starr taught him math and science and history, but best of all she taught him stories. She gave him the greatest gift of all—words. And when she'd read about other little boys—some who had lost grandmothers or uncles or fathers even—he cried. No one noticed, but he felt the tears form in the corners of his eyes. He'd pretend to drop a pencil or his crayons or suddenly have to dig through his backpack so he could wipe the tears before they had a chance to give him away. Or she'd read about friendship and love and perfect worlds, where no one went away, no one died, and everyone was happy.

☞ This excerpt is from a vignette about a little boy who had lost his father and was comforted by this "goddess" of a teacher.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Identify what you believe to be the *climax*.
2. What part would be the *denouement?*
3. Write a different *denouement for a story* you have read in class.

Description as a Method of Elaboration

Description can be used in any mode of writing to make a *visual point for the reader.*

☞ The following excerpt is from a *persuasive essay*.

Thesis: One of women's most treasured pastimes, shopping for clothes, should be banned because it can be a source of depression, a cause of wasted time and effort, and a cost-prohibitive activity.

FIRST BODY—SECOND POINT (SOURCE OF DEPRESSION—SECOND POINT):

Besides the window displays full of mannequins who have never eaten and wouldn't even if they came to life, *our fellow shoppers are intimidating*. These beautiful young creatures glide through the aisles of enticing clothing like goddesses. They choose outfits, hold them up to their perfect bodies, and wrinkle their tiny *Bewitched* noses. Apparently the to-die-for ensembles do not meet their movie-star standards. As women who *remember* high school but aren't currently swishing down its aisles, we watch, entranced. The discarded outfits we had thought to be mini-skirts are indeed entire dresses. The frocks themselves would have laughed at the notion of squeezing themselves over our heads. We envision the gruesome dressing-room picture of our pulling and tugging and twisting and turning, resulting in not only an I-need-a-therapist frustration but a vow to never enter the hallowed grounds of a mall again.

ACTIVITY

1. Overall, how does the *description help make the point* that shopping can be frustrating?
2. Quote *three lines* that are especially convincing.
3. Write a paragraph in which you take a stand—humorous or serious—and use *description* to help establish your point.

Descriptive Essay

Introduction

A descriptive essay is more organized if it is based on a *dominant impression*—the *central idea* on which the whole essay focuses.

Introduction = Attention-Getter and Thesis (in this case containing three specific places)

EXAMPLE:

When I was eight—and the world was still as bright and shiny as the brand-new quarter Uncle Fred used to pull from behind my ear—my mother and father and I took our first road trip to Grandma's house in Illinois. Of course, I had seen trees and cows and fields, but I had never seen so many trees and cows and fields—thousands, millions. They wouldn't let up. I was getting so sick of the sight of all that nature that I took to staring at the asphalt with its neatly drawn white or yellow lines, but asphalt can make a person a little tetched in the head, woozy, dizzy. It can mesmerize if one isn't careful. Oh, but when we pulled up to Grandma's, I knew excitement—real, honest-to-goodness excitement—for the first time. **[***The house itself, the sloped—not Texas-flat—backyard visible even from the driveway, and, at second glance, some foreign object that had landed on the roof—it all almost screamed fun.***] (Dominant Impression and Three Places)**

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Quote several *attention-getters* and examples proving that the author has *voice.*
2. What is the *dominant impression*?
3. On what *three places* will the essay focus?

Descriptive Essay

First Body

Body = Topic Sentence, Three Supports, and Elaboration

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

The house turned out to be a splendid thing indeed and promised to occupy me for days, weeks, maybe even suck me in entirely so that I would never have to leave. Perched smack-dab in the middle of the living room was a *staircase*. This was not just any straight, put-one-foot-in-front-of-the-other staircase, but a winding one that seemed to curve all the way to the heavens. Its steps, naturally, were not uniform, some places giant-wide, others teensy-tiny built just for fairies who tiptoe, whose fairy feet—as everyone knows—barely touch the earth. The grandest part of it all was the *railing*, which slithered like a serpent, twisting and turning, curling its way out of sight. It was just waiting for a little boy like me to hop on the polished wood, sideways, not daring to straddle its wildness, and careen down three flights, letting out war whoops along the way. Yes, I had found a new friend. A final mystery was the *balconies*, little bits of sky where precious memories could be made, souvenirs for my mind. I played with the assortment of Father's ancient toys, read the books he had read, and at night I would try to count every single star, lose track of my numbers, and have to start all over again. The house was truly like no other.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

For each of the highlighted points, list *the elaboration used* and especially good examples of *voice*.

Descriptive Essay

Second Body

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

When I needed some fresh Illinois air, I hit the backyard on rocket feet. In a jiffy, I was calling to the neighborhood boys to join me, and they heard through open summer windows and seemed to drift over from every house in town. We busied ourselves setting up the makeshift bases on Grandma's rolling backyard. That was the exciting part. Anyone can play a game of baseball, but hillside baseball is another sport entirely. Once we learned to lean into our sloped positions, *running* from base to base posed another new problem for America's favorite pastime. The unpredictable terrain made turtles out of hares and grew new boy-muscles that ached long into the night. Of course, *pitching and actually hitting* the ball were as difficult as digging one's way to China. A pitch was no longer fast and furious but more like watching a butterfly take flight, wondering where or even *if* it would land. Its trajectory would usually be Grandma's clothesline or the rolling expanse of grass that separated the pitcher from the batter or up, up, up in the sky—only to land back at the pitcher's feet. There must have been some law of physics that explained uneven surfaces and the path of baseballs on such planes, and yet the utter excitement that came from discovery, from something different, something new, made it all the more fun.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Add another sentence of elaboration to the *second point* about running.
2. How does the concluding sentence restate the *dominant impression?*

Descriptive Essay

Third Body

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

The best part of anything is always saved for last—in Grandma's case, the cupola. As it turned out, this mysterious place was a square little box of a thing with its waist-high sides and pointy roof—not the landing site of a spaceship after all. Who would have thought that this innocent-looking space could become a *fort*, my pretend soldiers and I aiming our pretend rifles at pretend Indians that lurked in the very real bushes in Grandma's front yard? I even realized that this strange structure could pose as a *tent* of sorts. At night I'd arm myself with leftovers from dinner, Coke poured carefully into my daddy's old canteen, a blanket, pillows, and a flashlight in case any Injuns decided to attack while I least expected it. It was fine sleeping—the sky ablaze with stars and moon and the cool air tingling my skin, almost tickling me to sleep. Those nights, though, when sleep had not yet settled in or in the early morning hours, I became a *spy* for our neighbors—heck, the whole neighborhood as far as I could see. Protecting them was my mission. I had to make sure that no enemies infiltrated our midst, that everything was as it should be, safe in this Illinois town.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

Which *support* do you think is the best? Explain why.

Descriptive Essay

Conclusion

Conclusion = Attention-Getter and Restatement of Thesis

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

Just being an eight-year-old boy can be a thing of wonder itself, and I had many chances to live out many dreams in my own home with my own friends in my own neighborhood. That one magical summer, though, I was given the best present of all—possibilities. In Grandma's house I was a discoverer, no less important than Christopher Columbus happening on a new world. In the backyard I was able to defy laws of nature or gravity or something I didn't quite understand. In that cupola—oh, I will always remember—I was not a boy but a man in charge of a whole community's welfare. Grandma's house was more than exciting. It was something that changed me, that made me look at things differently, with a more creative eye, "an Illinois attitude," Daddy would say and smile a knowing, secret smile telling me that he, too, had seen it all those years ago.

ACTIVITY

1. What are several "tricks" the author has used to make the conclusion interesting?
2. Essays are viewed as being more *sophisticated* if they build in a *theme.* What are some of the *possible themes* expressed in this piece?

☞ **NOTE:** The author took a compositional risk in the restatement of the thesis.

Dialect

Dialect is the *habits of speech* used by a particular race, class, or regional group.

EXAMPLE:

Mrs. Warren, a frustrated third-grade teacher, turned to her class with her usual, "Okay, all y'all need to get busy—and I mean seven-come-eleven—or it'll be Katy-bar-the-door for you. We're fixing to have a test on Friday, and it's time to fish, fight, or hold the light. Y'all hear what I'm saying?"

ASSIGNMENT

1. After determining the *origin of the dialect*, rewrite the teacher's directive to the students without any dialect.
2. Write two or three sentences using at least two examples of *different kinds of dialect.*

Dialogue as a Method of Elaboration

Dialogue is naturally expected in narrative writing, but a ''smattering'' of dialogue in any other mode of writing can also be used to make a point.

☞ The following excerpt is from a persuasive essay.

Thesis: Silence can give being at home, at school, and in the world in general a completely different perspective.

First Body—First Point:

What if we would declare war on noise in our homes just to test the waters, to get our toes wet? My friend Bethany could no longer scream ''Hey, you!'' from my poster bed in an effort to divert my ten-year-old attention from quietly and quite happily playing with my paper dolls. My brother's shrill command for me to, ''Hurry up, dork face, get out here before I give you a knuckle sandwich!'' would halt before the dreaded words could leap from his mouth. Some people don't realize that their voices register as a level-five hurricane and produce nothing but chaos and shattered nerves, like the big bad wolf huffing and puffing and blowing houses—our houses—down. Our very own relatives in our very own homes can wipe out whole cities, universes even, with a wail or whoop or shriek. Silence is a lost art form in the sanctuaries we call our homes.

ACTIVITY

☞ Notice that in the paragraph there is not an exchange of dialogue, which could change the mode of the essay.

1. What is the effect of the dialogue?
2. Using a persuasive topic sentence, write a short paragraph with a *smattering of dialogue* as one method of *elaboration*.

Editing for Grammar Mistakes

Editing is a necessary part of the writing process. *Mechanical (grammar) errors* can sometimes be *corrected simply*—retaining the same basic sentence structure—but other times mistakes call for *deep revision techniques*, such as recasting entire sentences.

EXAMPLE OF DRAFT NEEDING EDITING:

Edna has a secret, she actually likes school especially going to clifton middle school in houston texas. If she tells her fellow classmates that she looks forward to algebra I biology english and american history they are certain to label her a nerd a geek. Edna though knows another secret learning leads to worthwhile careers paths to success. Mrs. Moore Ednas computer literacy teacher told her that if she works hard enough she could land a job at places like boeing methodist hospital or even the fbi. Monday through friday Edna practices on her dell computer she feels like the computer specialists on shows such as csi. When she sees other kids not taking school seriously Edna just smiles to herself, she has a secret one that she'll never tell.

ACTIVITY

Correct the following *errors:*

Run-on sentences, capitalization **(course titles, cities and states, corporations, products, and days of the week)**, *quotation marks for some titles, semicolons* **(to separate two closely related sentences)**, *indentation for paragraphs,* and *commas* **(appositives, introductory clauses, commas in a series, and interrupters)**

Elaboration

Elaboration is one of the *key elements* of a good paper.

EXAMPLE:

[Kids should spend more time outside.] **(Topic Sentence)** One of the most important advantages **(Transition Phrase)** that the outdoors provides is an *appreciation of nature* in its many forms **(Point #1)**.

Elaboration

Besides developing more respect for what the out-of-doors offers **(Transition Phrase)**, it allows kids to be *physically active* **(Point #2)**.

Elaboration

Of course, in a time when people often hibernate in their homes **(Transition Phrase)**, the ''outer'' world is a perfect place to make new friends **(Point #3)**.

Elaboration

[Nature, activity, friends—what more could any kid want, especially when all can be had by simply opening a door?] **(Concluding Sentence)**

Possible methods of elaboration: action verbs, adjectives and adverbs, allusions, analogies, anecdotes, definitions, descriptions, facts, examples and explanations, figurative language, famous quotations, reasons, sensory images

ACTIVITY

Write at least three sentences of elaboration for each main point.

Elaboration: Examples and Explanation as a Method

Instead of just making a statement, writers need *examples or explanation* for their readers to envision, to believe their point.

☞ The following is an excerpt from a persuasive essay:

Thesis: We can learn to be confident in our work environments, relationships, and goals.

EXAMPLE:

First Body—First Point:

Our jobs are the perfect stage to practice our new roles as the confident ones. It's all in how we choose to meet our days. If we slouch in—briefcase weighing a ton, shoulders slumping, heads thrust forward like turtles peeking out of their shells—we have already announced to our nine-to-five-o'clock families that we are spent before we have even begun. However, if we purposefully put a spring in our steps, if those briefcases become treasure troves, if our shoulders are soldier-straight and our heads held high, we make another statement completely. We are proudly announcing, "Here we are—the we-can-do-anything people, the we're-going-to-have-a-great-day, confident team players." Who hasn't heard of a self-fulfilling prophecy? Or take the Little Red Engine's attitude of "I think I can. I think I can. I know I can." Or let's prove Descartes' theory true: "I think; therefore, I am." In no time, our fingers will be flying over keyboards, speeches will be made to our CEOs, and one good day, then another, and yet another will follow—all because of confidence.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Quote three examples of a worker who is not confident.
2. In contrast, quote three examples of what confidence looks like.

Elaboration: Researchable Fact as a Method

Usually student writers do not have the opportunity to *research a fact* while writing an essay in class. However, if a writer *knows a fact that will support his or her thesis*, the inclusion of the factual material is a sophisticated method of elaboration and *suggests a knowledge base outside the realm of the essay itself*.

EXAMPLES:

- A recent article in *People* magazine states that the lives of elderly people can be extended by having pets to feed, take for walks, and generally enjoy as companions.
- An online self-improvement article entitled ''Twelve Steps to a Healthy Me'' advises thirty minutes a day of aerobic activity to maintain weight (and more to drop pounds) in addition to at least fifteen minutes of strength conditioning three times weekly.

ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of these two examples and write a *topic sentence for a paragraph* that could include the *fact* as part of the *support*.

Euphemisms

A euphemism is the *substitution of an inoffensive term for an offensive, explicit one*.

EXAMPLE:

Euphemism	**More Offensive Term**
1. Custodian	Janitor
2. Domestic engineer	Maid
3. Passed on	Died
4. Less than stellar intelligence	Stupid
5. Not seeing eye-to-eye	Enemies
6. Restroom	The john
7. Enhanced interrogation techniques	Torture
8. Correctional facility	Prison
9. Pre-owned car	Used car
10. Bathroom tissue	Toilet paper

ACTIVITY

1. Pair with a classmate and brainstorm *five more euphemisms* and a less offensive term for each.
2. Do a Quick Write using *at least five euphemisms in a humorous tone.*

Expanded Moment

Instead of speeding past a moment, writers often *emphasize* it by *expanding the actions*.

☞ This is the *third body of an expository essay* about *three traits of a family*. The author has used an *expanded moment* as the *elaboration* to prove a point.

Third Body:

Perhaps the most important quality about our family is that we are ordinary. For instance, just the other evening we were on our way to the grocery store. Mama was holding a conversation with no one in particular while not once glancing at the ribbon of road that stretched before her, I was warbling out of tune with the radio, and Granddad was perched in the backseat puffing on his unfiltered Camel as if it were the last cigarette on the planet. Suddenly out of the thinnest of all airs old man Clower appeared and planted himself directly in the path of Mama's brand-new Buick. Of course, we hit him and of course he flew up and over the hood in a sort of delicate balletic arc and of course we piled out of the car to pluck his limp, bruised body from the honeysuckle bushes that lined the street. As he gathered himself together, he muttered, "Women drivers!" and hobbled on home.

ACTIVITY

Rewrite the paragraph *without using an expanded moment.*

Expository Writing

Introduction

Expository writing explains something or *gives information* about it. It is not meant to persuade, simply to give readers a *closer look at the subject.*

Introductions for multiparagraph essays begin with an *attention-getter* and end with a *thesis that states the aspects to be covered in the essay.*

EXAMPLE:

We have all had days that have made us want to push the snooze buttons on our alarms, pull the covers over our heads, and sleep like Rip Van Winkle. We know, though, that we must rise and shine, as the adults always advise, and get on with the grind of our days. Oh, but the books that await us when we are done with our work keep us afloat. **(Hook)** [Reading lets us leave our have-to's behind, enter whole new worlds, and learn something in the process.] **(Thesis)**

ACTIVITY

1. Explain the *appeal of the hook*.
2. Discuss the three aspects of reading that the essay will cover.
3. After *brainstorming* and *webbing* your own ideas, write an *introduction* for your expository essay.

Expository Writing

First Body

First Body = Topic Sentence, Three Points, Supports

EXAMPLE:

☞ T.W. = Transition Word

☞ T.P. = Transition Phrase

[Wouldn't it be a fantasy turned reality to take a giant eraser and wipe the slate clean of our days? Reading enables us to do just that.] **(Topic Sentences)** When we finally arrive home **(T.P.)**, *we vow to resign from the human race*. Our days have been whirlwinds of commands. As we contemplate just how to remove ourselves from the frenzy, we spy the solution out of the upper corner of our left eye—a book. As we read the front and back flaps **(T.P.)**, *we are hooked*. Our worlds no longer exist. Immediately we have become entwined with different people, different settings, different, more interesting conflicts. We shed our day like a snake sheds its skin. After the first pages, we no longer care what happened hours ago or even minutes ago. If our *duties at home beckon* **(T.P.)**, we can turn the proverbial deaf ear for fifteen minutes more in order to emerge rested, relaxed, and in a mood ready to confront whatever awaits us. Homework, chores, and helping out with younger siblings will all get done—eventually. [Reading promises to make us new, and it always keeps its word.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. Mark the *elaboration* for each point and explain how *voice* is evident.
2. Using the example paragraph as a model, write the *first body* to your essay.

Expository Writing

Second Body

Second Body = Same Elements as First

EXAMPLE:

[Besides providing an escape hatch from less than stellar days **(T.P.)**, reading is a magical door leading to worlds only books can provide.] **(Topic Sentence)** If we're in the mood for a little mystery **(T.P.)**, all we have to do is to pick up James Patterson, Patricia Cornwell, or Mary Higgins Clark, and we're enmeshed in a diabolical puzzle waiting to be solved. We can be part of a crime-solving team simply by kicking back in our easy chairs and turning pages. Maybe **(T.W.)** humor is what we're missing in our lives. Richard Peck or Max Brooks or any number of authors who make us laugh are as close as our bookshelves. We snort, chuckle, or just smile to ourselves over a protagonist's witty comeback. Some of us, though **(T.W.)**, would like to become a part of a different time, perhaps days long past, where women wore hoop skirts and sipped mint juleps on verandas, their men joining them after a rousing hunt. Or the future could be our period of choice, with its time machines à la Ray Bradbury or H. G. Wells. [Whatever or whoever we long to be for that one special hour lives on the pages of a book.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. Do the *same assignment* as for the first body.
2. Write your own *second body.*

Third Body

Third Body = Same as First and Second

EXAMPLE:

[If escaping our routine worlds and traveling to new ones aren't enough **(T.P.)**, books can serve as *silent teachers*.] **(Topic Sentence)** Who **(T.W.)** hasn't dreamed of having the luxury of a *hobby*? We can do just that by gathering together books on our favorite subject and burying our noses in them until we have had our fill for the evening or until reality calls from another room in the home we had forgotten for a moment. We go about the rest of our day, our heads held high, taking in breaths of fresh air—all because of books. Maybe **(T.W.)** there are *elective courses* that didn't jump off the list, grab us by our lapels, and forge our signatures on the sign-up sheet. Now, though, we can *play*—not work—by running, dancing, hopping, jumping into books on whatever subject tickles the hairs on our chinny-chin-chins. Art—Manet and Monet—we will know the difference, and we'll be proud at last. Dance—Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey, both legends—we'll turn page after page to discover why. *[Books hold the key to conquering the lessons the world has to offer.]* **(Concluding Sentence)**

☞ Sometimes *two subpoints* can be enough if the writer has explained them in such detail that a third point would be overkill.

ACTIVITY

1. Do the same assignment that you did for the other bodies.
2. Write your *third body*.

Expository Writing

Conclusion

Concluding Paragraph = Attention-Getter and Thesis That Restates the Three Aspects

EXAMPLE:

Strangely enough we find ourselves rising earlier in the morning. We didn't quite finish that chapter in our book last night. Our friends have started noticing a spring in our step, our penchant for injecting "I was just reading . . . " and something bearing a resemblance to a smile on our faces. Blame books. **(Attention-Getter)** *[Through reading, we can relax, step into whole new galaxies, and learn something along the way.]* **(Restatement of Thesis)**

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss why the *attention-getter* is a good one.
2. Write your own *conclusion.*

Extended Metaphor

Part #1

An extended metaphor is a metaphor in which *the main comparison is extended and developed throughout several or more lines.*

EXAMPLE:

Over dinner one night, Tom's mother asked him what his definition of "love" was.

After nearly choking on his chicken—trying to discern if his mother was suffering from scurvy, diphtheria, the plague, or dementia—he was able to compose himself long enough to say that quite honestly he had never thought about it.

"Well, think now, son. I need an answer." The scary part was that his mother had never posed such a difficult question to him, for starters. Besides that, he had never noticed that her eyes glazed over and that she got that little spit-froth thing going at the corners of her mouth.

Had an alien abducted his normal mother who talked about her day, his day, sports, the weekend, the weather, that kind of thing?

"Love," Tom couldn't help but notice that his voice had risen an octave, maybe two, "is . . . Well, it is . . . " and Tom decided gnawing on a chicken leg would somehow empower him. Suddenly it came to him. "Love is a rock." There. That sounded pretty good if he did say so himself, even if he had absolutely no idea what he meant.

Alien-woman looked at him—bored holes through his skull was more like it. "Like what? How?" his used-to-be mother spat out.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

Predict how Tom will compare love to a rock by writing fifty words of your own to *complete the extended metaphor*.

Extended Metaphor

Part #2

(Continued from previous page.)

''Like what? How?'' Tom was buying himself time. ''Well, it's solid.'' Tom congratulated himself on a commendable beginning. ''It lasts forever, it can be found most anywhere, and it comes in all shapes and sizes.''

He was on a roll. What's up with this? Tom was wondering. He must be morphing into some kind of genius.

He cast a wary glance at alien-woman, who was suddenly looking more and more like his mother.

''Well, then, son, *you* are my rock.''

His mother's eyes were back to being her real eyes. The spit-froth thing had disappeared, and as she spooned a large helping of mashed potatoes onto her plate, she asked, ''So what time is your game Friday?''

Tom didn't know what had just happened, but he figured that he and his mother were on solid ground—rock-solid ground.

ACTIVITY

1. What are the *two ways* that the author *completed the extended metaphor*?
2. Pass your ending down your row and decide which ending from each row to read aloud.

Famous Quotations Blending into Author's Own Words

Using a *famous quotation* to help make a point not only adds eloquence, humor, or whatever the tone of the quote is but also acts like an *expert agreeing with a writer's idea.*

☞ The following is an exercise using a *famous quotation* woven into the writer's words to form a collage, a picture out of language.

> You asked me who I am? *"Well, ain't I a woman,"* I say to you, a screeching soft woman, flinging and fluttering the crisp sheets fresh off the line, sunshine still playing in their creases, my hands hurrying to set things to rights, kitchens and children and men. And I am the rhythm of a woman. I walk and sway and dip while I dance and come up for air, to take some of the same deep breaths I share with all women, to prove that still, through it all, I will not, cannot, stop. Oh, and I laugh, I laugh, long and loud even if I am the only one to hear and I stomp my feet and slap my knees and raise my song to the timbers. Who am I? you asked. The one not crouching, not afraid but bold, arms outstretched to catch and hold whatever comes my way. Why do I need to say all this, to think it even, when standing before you should be enough?

The famous quote is from Sojourner Truth.
The rest of the piece was written by the author.

ASSIGNMENT

1. For homework, find *ten quotations* with which you identify.
2. Using one of the quotations, write a vignette *expressing who you are.*

Famous Quotations as Methods of Elaboration

☞ The following is an example of using famous quotations to *support a point.*

EXAMPLE:

Guy de Maupassant says to just get *"black on white,"* and, of course, he is talking about the act of writing. Writing leaves us free to invent, call forth the muse, sink our teeth into the delicious blank pages. The rumblings of the brain stretching and groaning a bit as it awakens are music to the mind becoming words on the page. We might brainstorm, map, web, free write—all invention methods to flex our muscles, wipe the cobwebs aside, and get moving. As Ray Bradbury assures us, *"In quickness is truth."* It's the drafting that rushes the blood, that is as addictive as the most succulent dessert. We're hooked as soon as we see part of ourselves on the page, but we've learned our lessons well, editing for structure, voice, and mechanics as we move along as fast as our pens will take us. The final touch is like Donald Murray's *"the gloaming hour"* when the sun hasn't quite made its descent and all is quiet and right with the world. We sit back and read, again and again, and like Faulkner we see now that literature is *"something that will be read more than once."*

ACTIVITY

1. For practice in *structure*, determine the topic sentence and three points of the paragraph.
2. Explain how the quotations add to the piece.

Famous Quotations

Top Ten

Famous quotations can be used in writing to help make a point even stronger by having a noteworthy person support your beliefs.

- Winners got scars too. (Johnny Cash, American singer)
- What is success? It is a toy balloon among children armed with pins. (Gene Fowler, American writer)
- There is no formula for success. But there is a formula for failure, and that is trying to please everybody. (Nicholas Ray, American film director)
- People don't choose their careers. They are engulfed by them. (John Dos Passos, American writer)
- I cheated in the final of my metaphysics examination: I looked into the soul of the boy sitting next to me. (Woody Allen, American comedian and film director)
- The best thing about humor is that it shows people that they're not alone. (Sid Caesar, American comedian)
- Poetry is what in a poem makes you laugh, cry, prickle, be silent, makes your toenails twinkle, makes you want to do this or that or nothing, makes you know that you are not alone in the unknown world, that your bliss and suffering is forever shared and forever all your own. (Dylan Thomas, Welsh poet)
- The wise man is astonished by anything. (André Gide, French writer)
- If you think education is expensive, try ignorance. (Derek Bok, American academic)
- The human mind is like an umbrella—it functions best when open. (Walter Gropius, German architect)

ACTIVITY

Find ten quotations that apply to you and bring them to class. Be ready to explain how one or two relate to your life.

Fantasy

Fantasy is an imaginative or fanciful work that usually deals with *supernatural or unnatural events or characters.*

two flying pterodactyls were perching on my back
while mice were busy binding my feet with
sashes from my new drapes
Lisa, my hair stylist, was highlighting my "do"
and Mr. Gillis, my elementary principal, was giving me a
mani and pedi, a bright red, which I never wear
but then I raised my hand in Dr. Bittrick's
English class
and began to tell him that I knew all about Dylan Thomas
who wasn't fond of punctuation marks so I was saying that
to avoid run-on sentences one could use
a variety of methods
which came singsonging before I could stop them
while Dr. Bittrick took notes but that was before
I had begun to perspire profusely
and moved to a dry spot and turned
the pillow over
only to hear Uncle Fred playing
"Jingle Bells and All Their Reindeer"
on his piano
like it was Christmas
but it wasn't
because Mama and I were lying in the
backyard in our hammocks
watching a motorcycle gang ride
through our house
emerging fat and sassy with fajitas and guacamole
and chips and salsa
my head was beginning to hurt

yes it was I could tell
so I put my hand to my forehead
right before I climbed out the window
of my sixth-grade art class to get
Mrs. Johnston a Coke
I sat up, covers and sheets bunched,
I was thirsty
at least I think I was

ACTIVITY

How is this based on the imagination yet is something very real?

Figurative Language Fill-Ins

Sometimes writers need a *Quick Write structure* to help them use *figurative language.*

My Favorite Place

________________ is my favorite place to be. Here I can see

____________ as ____________ as ____________,

____________ as ____________ as ____________,

and ____________ as ____________ as ____________.

I can hear ________________________________,

____,

and ____________________________________.

I can feel ________________________________

while I __________________________________.

I can see, I can hear, I can feel in my favorite place, ____________.

ACTIVITY

Fill in the blanks with *phrases of at least ten words* each, using the appropriate *figurative language* and *imagery*.

Flashback

A *flashback* is *information that occurred before the story*, to give the reader important information about a character or an event.

> Ten years since my high school prom, and I had thought I had forgotten—so many shopping trips, so much girl-giggling in dressing rooms, so many outfits—but here it is in the Gently Worn store window. I freeze.
>
> ''Mama!'' I yelled frantically from my bedroom, ''my dress is gone!'' My black sequined dress had been laid out with my shoes and jewelry and purse. Now it was gone, the dress I had saved two months' allowance for. Mama appeared like Houdini not only out of nowhere but at lightning speed. She saw it too, oh not the dress, its remains. It was as if it had left an imprint on my bed like when a seashell leaves it mark on the sand, and now we both stared at what used to be my dress.
>
> ''Beth,'' we both said simultaneously, barely able to form the word. Beth was the one who played on the backyard trolley with me, rode like the wind on our bicycles even in the rain, and helped me find my hamster in Mrs. Grover's garden. That same Beth had been over just that afternoon to look at what I was to wear and now—and now—I had to face it. My best friend was a thief.

ACTIVITY

1. What *insight* does the flashback give about the narrator *that is still true*?
2. How does the author make *the transition from present to past?*

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is giving readers a hint of some *important event, character trait,* or other pertinent information? that *will be revealed later in the piece.*

EXAMPLE:

Every day after school five-year-old Kevin would sneak up to the Christmas tree strung with blinking lights like miniature stars on a clear night and touch each gift in its turn. At first he just felt them to make sure they weren't fake like the ones in Macy's windows. Then Kevin started shaking them and thrilled to his own little secret—that he felt like one of Santa's helpers.

Little did Kevin suspect that all those innocent times were leading up to something. All it took was one week of going over and over paper and bows and checking and rechecking which presents had his name written on them.

Finally, Kevin's curiosity and imagination triumphed. One week to the day, Kevin opened his first present—the shiny red toy truck he had asked for. It was all he could manage to do to rewrap the treasure in his childish way.

Of course Kevin's parents knew, and of course Kevin tried to act surprised on Christmas morning, but deep inside he realized that some things are better left as secrets, and not once did Kevin ever forget that lesson.

ASSIGNMENT

Underline *the clues that foreshadowed* Kevin's opening a present before Christmas.

Fragments

A *fragment* is an *incomplete sentence*, usually one that is missing either a subject or a verb.

The first time I prepared myself for a picnic was kind of like walking in high-heeled shoes. Not that, being a twelve-year-old boy, I had ever walked in high-heeled shoes. It wasn't like I was born with picnicking etiquette. Anyway, it was too late. For picnic lessons. And someone had already checked out the last copy of *Twelve Steps to Proper Picnicking*. I had to wing it. At this point. And just hope she wouldn't find out.

***

My grandfather sitting in front of the television, pretending to be reading the paper instead being fast asleep. Grandma in the kitchen peeling potatoes and humming some old song everyone was tired of. Marge in the kitchen in front of the ''boob tube,'' as Mama put it. And me. Ready to skedaddle at a moment's notice.

***

We have gone together for three months, and now I have just decided to be friends. Even knowing he still wants the boyfriend-girlfriend thing. The ring-on-the-finger thing. The till-death-do-us-part thing. He wants me to be his girl. Until he is ninety-six and I'm a young ninety-five.

ACTIVITY

Turn the fragments into sentences by reading them aloud, adding any necessary words or combining any phrases.

Friendly Letter

Heading, Salutation, Introduction

Friendly letters begin with a heading, followed by a salutation, and usually an introduction.

415 Cedar Drive
League City, TX 77573
July 20, ______ **(Heading)**

Dear Mrs. O'Conner, **(Salutation)**

I won't lie. My mother is making me write to you. Actually she's pretending to scrub the kitchen counters while I sit at the table so that she can keep one eye—probably all eight eyes, knowing her—on me. Of course, the eye part was a joke, sort of, since I swear she sees everything I do, everywhere I go.

(Continued on next page.)

As with any writing, friendly letters benefit from an introduction before the writer gets into the real message.

ACTIVITY

1. What *humor* has the author used to introduce the *tone* of his letter?
2. Write the *heading, salutation,* and *introduction* to a friendly letter of your own.

Friendly Letter

Body, Part #1

After the introduction comes the *body* or *bodies* of the letter.

(Continued from previous page.)

> That's the reason I'm writing. At least one of her eyes saw us—yours truly and my friends who shall remain nameless unless my mother makes them write too—wrapping your house. We were having a fine time tossing and looping and weaving and swirling. Actually, we looked at the process as art in the making. Anyone can have a house, bushes, trees, a dog, but only *special* people have the opportunity to have their environment transformed into a life-sized sculpture. You yourself have to admit that your house went from the dead of summer to the night before Christmas—toilet-paper icicles hanging bountifully, trees and bushes singing songs of praise, so proud of their new adornment. Scruffy, though, was the *pièce de résistance*. One moment a mutt, the next a king—okay, more like an Egyptian king mummified, wrapped in his earthly finery, ready for his afterlife.

☞ In this case, the author is leading into his apology by using humor to convince the reader that the mischievous act was actually a gift of sorts.

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss the *humor* used.
2. What *points of persuasion* are being used?
3. Write a *body* of a friendly letter of your own.

(Continued on next page.)

Friendly Letter

Body, Part #2

(Continued from previous page.)

☞ Some friendly letters require more than one body, especially if the topic or purpose changes.

> On that note, then, I hope you understand that our intent was not a harmful one, rather one of beautification. We are sorry, though, that when the torrential downpour came, our priceless work turned into hard labor for you and your soggy family. I would have helped, sloshing about, but I was fever-stricken.

☞ In this case the author is still trying to dismiss any wrongdoing as well as giving the reader a reason for his not helping to make amends for his mistake.

> All is forgiven now, I hope. I can assure you that my guilt is overwhelming and ever-present and will remind me that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. As your neighbor and nipped-in-the-bud artist, I apologize.

☞ This letter ends with a concluding paragraph whose intention is to once and for all put the situation behind him.

> Your friendly, apologetic neighbor,
>
> William **(Signature)**

ACTIVITY

1. Quote the *humorous* lines.
2. Write the rest of your letter: *another body, concluding paragraph,* and *signature.*

Full-Circle Ending in Narratives and Quick Writes

A full-circle ending uses a phrase or two from the beginning of the piece to round off the story.

EXAMPLE:

He had wanted to be something extraordinary when he grew up, something special, something that would make his mother proud. After all, his mother was a big influence in his life.

One summer day James's mother spotted him in his old tire swing, note pad balanced on his lap, his pencil doing what surely must have been somersaults, leaping and dancing across the page, not once coming up for air. James didn't even notice his mom watching. Fifteen whole minutes and James never took his eyes off his work.

***

Many years later he would think of those times in the yard, his oblivion to everything except his stories. He realized that subconsciously he had decided what he would become even then. He considered it a noble profession to tell stories that people would cherish, to put thoughts into words that made his readers whisper, "Me, too."

James had wanted to be something extraordinary, something special, something that would make his mother proud. Somehow he knew that he had.

ACTIVITY

Write a beginning for a Quick Write and pass it to the person behind you, who will add a sentence or two that could come before the full-circle ending **(such as the "Many years later . . ." in this example).**

Full-Circle Ending in Free Verse Poems

EXAMPLE:

long ago *friends*
never really leave
they sneak in again
wherever they dare
in the middle of the night
when you kick off the *covers*
maybe it's your feet
hot-night feet
that bring it all back
they took all the steps
with you after all
to classes and *lockers*
to the pond after school
to the first dance
or maybe
years later
you're in the middle
of an exam
and before you know it
the next answer
is your friend
your best one
you've written the
name
you stare at it
and before you erase
you're back
where you once
had been
middle school, lockers

pond
first dance
without warning
these *ghosts*
slip right in
like starting over
because long ago friends
never leave

ACTIVITY

Write five nouns and pass them to a neighbor, who will then have five minutes to write a free verse poem using the nouns and coming full circle.

Hooks

Part #1

A *hook* is an *attention-getter* used in the introduction of an essay to *arouse the reader's interest*.

☞ There are many forms a hook may take:

Questions

Who hasn't dreamed of another life? Who hasn't gotten up, gone to school or work—day after day, year after year, one routine after another—only to realize that life, at least the one they had envisioned for themselves, is passing them by? **(Hook)** [Maybe we haven't realized that *our real lives differ dramatically from our imagined lives* in terms of housework and work in general but are similar in the hope they both provide.] **(Thesis)**

Bad day at school or work? Who hasn't experienced an I-don't-want-to-talk-about-it-leave-me-alone mood? Maybe laughter is the key. Upside down mouths, grumpy harrumphs, and silly old closed-in body language suddenly give way to warmth, and pretty soon smiles turn to giggles, which erupt into full-throated songs of laughter. **(Hook)** [*If we had more laughter in the world,* we would notice differences in young people, adults, and relationships in general.] **(Thesis)**

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. For both examples, explain which phrases *hook* the reader.
2. For each example, *identify the type* (mode) of writing.
3. For each thesis, write the *three aspects to be covered in the essay.*
4. Write a *question hook* and a *thesis* **(containing three aspects to be covered)** for the following prompt:

   "The world would be a better place without jealousy."

Hooks

Part #2

(Continued from previous page.)

Quotation

The familiar song lyrics, "When given a choice between sitting it out or dancing, I hope you dance," are a plea for action, whether we realize it or not. The idea, of course, is to dance literally, yes, but figuratively as well—to not miss out on life. These simple words want us to have fun, click our red-heeled shoes together mid-air, and whistle as we do so. So it is with humor. When given a choice between laugher or its counterpart, old man seriousness, let's hope we choose the fun of it all. **(Hook)** [*Humor* can help us embrace the world, give ourselves a break from pessimistic attitudes, and enable us to help others view their lives from a different perspective.] **(Thesis)**

Scene

The breeze flutters its fingers through our hair, tickles our outstretched bodies, and plays with our bare toes. We turn over on our beach towels and feel the sun on our backs. The beach with its endless miles of pure white sand is ours, and our fingers dig deep into its fine particles. "Students, will someone be so kind as to answer question number four." Mrs. Plath has uprooted us from our daydreaming and brought us back to math reality. **(Hook)** [More people should realize that daydreaming allows us to escape our real worlds, provides us with much-needed relaxation, and gives us the chance to get to know ourselves.] **(Thesis)**

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. For each example, *identify the type* (mode) of writing.
2. Choose one of the *types of hooks* illustrated in the examples and write a *hook* and *thesis for the following prompt:*

   "Friends are one of life's necessities."

Hooks

Part #3

(Continued from previous page.)

Description

Porches, the wind gently blows while we have the opportunity to sit back—feet propped up on anything nearby, freshly brewed coffee in hand—as we take in the view and actually breathe. Kids and adults alike can be found stretched out enjoying midsummer's dreams, worries and worldly duties forgotten, being replaced by lazy activities, ones we do not have to do, rather ones we want to do. **(Hook)** [Porches are those rarities in life that let us appreciate nature, relax with absolutely no agenda, and provide a place for us to play.] **(Thesis)**

Allusion

Just as the novelist Virginia Woolf believes, we all need time and space to write. What if we extend her meaning to apply to more than writing—to life itself? [If we try to carve out more time and space for ourselves, we can be more productive in our personal, social, and work environments.] **(Thesis)**

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. *Identify the mode* of writing for each hook.
2. *Choose one type* and write your own hook and thesis.

Hooks

Part #4

(Continued from previous page.)

Background Information

Ray Bradbury believes that putting just one word on paper can lead to a lifetime of writing fun. When he wrote the simple word "carnival," *Something Wicked This Way Comes* was born, and "time machine" led to a *Dandelion Wine* chapter—miracles all! When we let our thoughts trickle from our minds down our arms to our fingertips to form words, then sentences, and finally paragraphs, that is empowerment, and we might just feel that tingle of Bradbury's zest and gusto. **(Hook)** [Writing is building whole new worlds and putting us smack-dab in the middle of them, having the super-power of making bullies whimper in our presence, and finally finding out the secret of our own lives.] **(Thesis)**

Examples and Repetition

"Yes, ma'am, no sir, thank you, pardon me"—these terms of politeness are like a foreign language used by aliens from the planet Mars. *Or maybe* they are from some dusty dictionary that hasn't been opened in decades. *Or perhaps* they come from a gentler, more formal time when people were genteel and respect was in the air. **(Hook)** [We all should be more polite at home, at school, and with ourselves.] **(Thesis)**

ACTIVITY

Choose one of the types of hooks and write a *hook* and *thesis* for the following prompt:

If you could, would you choose to see the future?

How-To Vignette

A *how-to vignette* is a short-short **(snapshot)** that explains the *process* of an activity.

EXAMPLE:

How to Eat Soup

The proper way to eat soup was also on my mother's agenda. I was instructed to sip from the side—not the end—of my spoon, my lips barely touching the gleaming silver. No noises were to be made. Slurping was forbidden, sucking noises—I learned—were for pigs, and even my customary blowing on the hot liquid was a thing of the past. During my etiquette lessons with Mama, I swear I could see my why-couldn't-I-have-just-been-raised-by-wolves look in that polished-to-perfection upturned spoon. Soon I knew to scoop away from, not toward, myself and to place my spoon on the plate beneath the bowl. Apparently, according to Mama, only heathens let the poor, embarrassed spoon remain in the bowl. Soup was taking on a whole new dimension, and I feared what would come next.

ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm topics for a Quick Write *how-to piece.*
2. Choose a topic from your list and write *five steps in sequential order.*
3. Using your five steps, write a ten-minute Quick Write explaining how to accomplish the activity you chose.

How-To or Process Writing

Introduction

How-to writing explains the *steps in a process.*

Like any other essays, the introduction should begin with a *hook* and end with a *thesis that reveals the three steps.*

EXAMPLE:

> What's that? A sound maybe like breathing or a whisper, or is it a barely audible giggle? Maybe it's a feeling—an almost imperceptible brushing of skin against skin. ''Nothing is out of place, though. Everything is as it should be, but there is that feeling,'' people will think to themselves, maybe even say out loud. What they don't realize is that it's the magic of invisibility at work. **(Hook)** [Becoming invisible is simple if we make a wish, consider the places to hide, and don't forget to bask in our powers.] **(Thesis with Three Steps)**

ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm your own ideas for a how-to and *web three main steps.*
2. Study the example for *voice* in the *hook* and the *three steps in the thesis.*
3. Write an *introduction* for your own how-to essay.

How-To or Process Writing

First Body

First Body = Topic Sentence, Three Main Points, Elaboration, Voice

EXAMPLE:

[The *most* essential step is *making a wish*.] **(Topic Sentence with T.W.)** Since most of us don't have a genie-in-a-bottle trick at our disposal, we will have to test our powers of creativity. Maybe **(T.W.)** we are *tired of our responsibilities* at school and home and long to escape. After all, who can make us do math homework or mow the lawn or baby-sit our screaming, fit-throwing brothers and sisters if they can't see us? Or perhaps **(T.W.)** we are *shy and feel uncomfortable* under the constant scrutiny of others. Our timid personalities would get a needed boost if we could have an opportunity to practice confidence, put on a different attitude, and walk around in it all unnoticed. Finally **(T.W.)**, let's just admit it: We might just wish for an I-don't-see-anyone day (or week or month) to be able to *spy on people*. If we are honest, many of us have a sneaky desire to hover over people, hear what is really being said about us, and—horror of all horrors—check out the answers to tests in every class without being detected. [All we have to do is to make a wish.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. List the *three main subpoints,* state the one you identify with most, and quote what you think is the *best example of voice*.
2. Write the *first body* for your paper.

How-To or Process Writing

Second Body

Second Body = Same as First

☞ Be sure that steps are in sequential order.

☞ T.P. = Transition Phrase

EXAMPLE:

[The next **(T.W.)** key element is *considering the places* to hide.] **(Topic Sentence)** If we are the daring sort **(T.P.)**, we might want to try, as the adage advises, to *hide in plain sight*. In school, we could be stuffed in our seats as usual. The only difference is that no one would be able to see us. At home, we could slide right up to our parents with a nana booboo you-used-to-see-me-but-now-you-don't, fooled-you attitude. Another option **(T.P.)** that we might consider is the *hovering approach*. The air could be our lair. We could be the dark cloud—threatening rain—that hangs over our visible buddies as they lose another game, or a bright, sunny puff of nothingness that is just low enough to put us in touch with our friends' shenanigans without anyone being the wiser. Maybe, though **(T.P.)**, we might want *confinement, security*, a metaphorical warm blanket for our new power. A closet might suit us, where we can curl up and nap unseen among the coats, no one ever finding our secret place. Or a shelf might be more to our liking, so that we could squeeze in amongst the books and knickknacks and watch the action as if we were that porcelain cat of Miss Weatherby's. [Yes, places to be invisible are of utmost importance.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. Again, study the *three subpoints, elaboration,* and *usage of voice*.
2. Write your *second body*.

How-To or Process Writing

Third Body

Third Body = Same as First and Second

EXAMPLE:

[What is the use of wish-making and place-deciding **(T.P.)** if we don't finally *bask in our glory?*.] **(Topic Sentence)** One important thing **(T.P.)** to gloat over is that *we have done it*. We have beaten the odds, defied the laws of nature, and gone where no man has gone before—and gone, we might add, on little invisible cat feet. Bravo for us! Of course, then **(T.P.)**, who wouldn't count the sheer *fun of invisibility* the grandest adventure of a lifetime? We have stuck out our tongues, thumbed our noses, turned tails and run if we didn't like what we saw and heard. Yet we have also smiled and stretched out on the ground and rolled around in the grass for the pure pleasure it, of being undetected, of not having to care what others think it. Who would deny that our newly found power is joy in its purest form? Maybe, though **(T.P.)**, we should step back and *look at the experience from the eyes of others*. A thought to be considered is that our teachers, friends, and parents need a break from us. What a selfless feeling it is to give them the pleasure of our absence. [Being invisible is useless if we don't appreciate it.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. Which do you think is the best sentence that *exemplifies voice?*
2. Write your *third body*.

How-To or Process Writing

Conclusion

Conclusion = Attention-Getter and Restatement Thesis

EXAMPLE:

How much more powerful our secret would be if people only knew that the sound was us, and it *was* a whisper or giggle or actually anything we felt like, anything at all. There was a feeling, too, when we accidentally touched someone, our bare arms like a brushstroke against the canvas of their very visible bodies. **(Attention-Getter)** [Our stepping into the realm of invisibility can occur if we make a wish, consider the places to hide, and bask in the power bestowed on us.] **(Restatement of Thesis and Three Steps)**

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss how the attention-getter comes *full circle*.
2. Write the *conclusion* to your own paper.

Humor

Whether the laugh-out-loud variety, the more subtle forms, or sarcasm—*humor* can help turn a ''boring'' paper into one that can raise a reader's spirits.

EXAMPLE:

Dear Miss Prichett,

My mother thought it would be a good idea for me to tell you something about myself—even before I set one sordid Nike into your pristine classroom (Mother's words to impress you).

One thing you should know about me is that I'm a normal twelve-year-old boy. I keep all kinds of things in my pockets, such as frogs (live ones, at least till they croak—get it?), stones in case one of my friends wants to see how far we can skip them across the pond out back (I prefer slimy ones because they cast off better, but don't tell since they're my secret weapon), and my stapler. Here's the part you'll like because it shows my ingenuity. See, I like to post ''wanted'' signs about people on trees around the neighborhood. You know, ''Ken Jones: Wanted for Pulling Cats' Tails'' or ''Margaret Peabody: Wanted for Being the Biggest Cheater in School and GETTING AWAY WITH IT,'' and—please don't get mad, cause it's kind of a compliment, but one time I stapled ''Miss Prichett: Wanted for Being the Hardest (translates as *best*) Teacher in the Universe.''

See you sooner than we both want,

Mark Elliott

ACTIVITY

Interview a classmate and write a letter telling a teacher what he or she is like.

Hyperbole

A *hyperbole* is an exaggeration for effect.

EXAMPLE:

> "Now I have the headache of the century, thanks to the two thousand math problems that the meanest math teacher on the face of the planet assigned. Yeah, I figure it'll take me every waking moment from the last bell today to the beginning of homeroom tomorrow to finish. I doubt I'll even have a chance to breathe. You're so lucky that your brain is the size of a village, and I'm stuck with the Black Hole, especially when it comes to quadratic formulas, which no one has ever found a use for in his or her entire life. Did I mention that I have a headache bigger than Dallas?"

☞ Hyperboles, like any other figurative language device, are *not meant to be overused* **(as the paragraph has done);** rather, they are to be used *sparingly to enhance a work as a method of elaboration.*

ASSIGNMENT

1. *Identify* the hyperboles in the dialogue above.
2. For a humorous effect, write a short piece that uses *as many hyperboles as possible*. Or write a sentence or two containing *a hyperbole that could actually be used in an essay.*

Hyphenated Modifier

Hyphenated modifiers can add a little spice to a paper. Instead of a one-word adjective, these are several words connected by hyphens that work as one adjective to modify a noun.

☞ Be sure *not* to put a hyphen between the last adjective and the noun itself.

EXAMPLES:

1. He told me to iron his shirts. Maybe he asked me, or maybe he just gave me the *won't-you-do-this-one-small-thing-for-me* look.
2. The call I cared about was Buzz's, but that's the call I'd never get, because I was a sophomore and he was a senior and Little Miss *I'm-the-best-cheerleader-in-the-world,* Marilyn Catrell, had him in a neck-lock every minute of every day.
3. Bill couldn't stand it. Just because he liked chess and not sports, the athletes had these *you'd-better-bow-down-before-us* attitudes.
4. Mr. Cunningham hears what he wants to hear. I've said in my clearest *I've-had-elocution-lessons* voice at least 42,000 times that I'm going to be gone for the mid-term. What does he say every day to me? "Are you studying for your mid-term?" Okay, maybe he needs a hearing aid.
5. Even though he had just gotten off the bus and was shifting his back-pack around, I knew it was the new kid, the bully. I recognized the *I'm-ready-for-you-guys-now-just-try-something* stare that was obviously a permanent part of his face.

ACTIVITY

To prove the effectiveness of the hyphenated modifiers, *replace each group of words with a single adjective.*

Idioms

Idioms are the speech forms that are used within a given language, a regional speech, or specialized vocabulary.

EXAMPLE:

Kick the bucket.

Shake a leg.

Break a leg.

Dinner's on me.

Give me a hand.

You're getting under my skin.

She's got a bee in her bonnet.

Quit hounding me.

Since I was wrong, I had to eat crow.

ACTIVITY

Idioms are sometimes listed at the end of the definition of a word in unabridged dictionaries. Using a dictionary, find *five idioms*.

Inference

Inference is the act of *deducing* or *concluding from evidence*. Writers need to be aware of the art of inference if a reader is to truly understand some pieces, to read between the lines, to get at the meaning.

Sarah put one grimy
finger in her mouth
extracting a
bright pink
wad impaled
on her fingernail
''What ya' doin,'
sissy?''
''Shut up, Franny.
Little sisters ask
too many questions''
Sarah was thinking
as she
proceeded to nestle
the shapeless
form
dead-center in
their daddy's stew,
give it a hearty stir
just in time for
the usual,
''Hurry up in there,
girls! I ain't got all day!
I'm hungry now!
You hear me?''

the old man
barked
completely
unaware
of his fate

ACTIVITY

Brainstorm several things that you could *infer* from this poem.

Irony of Situation

Irony of situation occurs when what happens is the opposite of what the reader has expected.

EXAMPLE:

John always knows everything: the causes of the Civil War, the meaning of existentialism, and what purpose cosecants serve. That's why John will eventually become valedictorian. That's why John struts around with this has-everyone-noticed-the-celestial-glow-around-my-Einstein-like-larger-than-life-head aura. That's why everyone hates John.

Just Wednesday Mrs. Francis squeaked down the aisle in her infamous rubber-soled shoes. I myself find it ironic that she prohibits any noise from us, yet she's the source of the din she disdains. If it's not her shoes wailing at every step, it's her snorting nasal congestion, or her rasping voice yelling in her commando SWAT-team-like orders that we can't begin to understand, yet alone follow.

"After figuring the square root of pi, multiply your answer by $4/5 \times 20/9$ to the nth power and subtract the distance from the earth to the moon."

I lost her after "square." Maybe it's because I'm hungry. Every stomach rumble of mine causes the earth to quake and Mrs. Francis to give me the evil eye and everyone else to look in my direction as if flatulence—not hunger—were my problem.

All I know is that John is going to be my new BFF. Maybe he's not so bad after all. Besides, I could use a little celestial glow—whatever that is.

ACTIVITY

1. What is the *irony of this situation*?
2. Quote several instances to prove your conclusion.

Interview Questions

Get-Acquainted Exercise

This exercise is fun for students to do at the beginning of the year in order to get to know each other; however, it can be done at any time. *Interviewing uses higher-level thinking in terms of application.*

☞ **The interviewer should always make his or her subject elaborate.**

☞ **The interviewer takes notes.**

1. If you could be a *character in a book*, who would you be and why?
2. Explain what *experience in your life has affected you the most.*
3. Elaborate about your *biggest pet peeve.*
4. List *three adjectives that describe you* and explain.
5. What *aspect of your personality* would you like to change and why?

ACTIVITY

1. In pairs, students interview each other, using these questions.
2. Independently, students must think of ten more questions of their own and interview either the same person or another class member.

Literary Analysis

Introduction

Literary analysis papers provide readers with an insight into some aspect of a novel, story, play, poem, and the like. The support for the thesis is in the form of the author's words woven in with textual material for proof.

☞ Be sure to merge the quoted material with your own words.

☞ Note that literary analysis papers are written in present tense.

Introductory Paragraph = Title of Work, Author's First and Last Name, Sentence Tying Thesis to Work, and Thesis

> In "Story of an Hour," Kate Chopin condenses the history of a marriage—with all the nuances of feelings, reactions to situations, and inferences about the relationship of the couple—into a snapshot, sixty short minutes that ironically tell the tale of a lifetime. Irony continues to move the narrative forward and presents itself as the central, controlling force in the protagonist's actions, environment, and inner thoughts and feelings.

ACTIVITY

1. Explain the author's view about how the title of the work is ironic.
2. State which three aspects will be the main focus of the literary analysis.
3. Write an introduction for a literary analysis of your own.

Literary Analysis

First Body

First Body = Topic Sentence, Main Points, Supports with Textual Quotes, and Concluding Sentence if Necessary

☞ Be sure to give the reader enough information about the piece so that your points make sense.

> [Ironic to the plot of the entire story is Mrs. Mallard's initial shock upon learning of her husband's death in a railroad accident.] **(T.S)** On the surface, at least, her actions are those that any bystander would expect. To learn that Mrs. Mallard **"wept at once with sudden, wild abandonment"** paints a picture of a woman overcome by grief that cannot be outwardly contained. Any other reaction would have raised eyebrows and at the very least be a cause of concern. People are often confused by inappropriate reactions, and Mrs. Mallard plays her role well. As readers we wait, then, for the temporary moment **"when the storm of grief had spent itself"** but are surprised that a woman who has her sister and her husband's friend as support *wants to be alone, that she asks no questions about the accident itself, that she almost immediately seeks solitary solace*. We cannot ignore the irony that the cause of such purported pain does not solicit details to be laid out and examined piece by piece in an effort to better understand the shattering of a world.
>
> All quoted passages from Chopin, Kate, "The Story of an Hour," http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/webtexts/hour/, accessed Feb. 5, 2009.

ACTIVITY

1. List the major points that the author makes to support the theory of irony.
2. How do the quotations taken from the text add to the points?
3. Write the first body of your paper.

Second Body

Second Body = Same as First

Once Mrs. Mallard has removed herself from friends who could comfort her, her *environment* changes. **(T.S.)** The first glimpses of the world she would no long share with her husband are *not of death but ironically of life*. Even the fact that she acknowledges that **''the tops of trees . . . were all aquiver with the new spring life,''** startles the reader. We expect her to reflect on her beloved past, a husband and wife's lifetime together, and to look with a *sense of hopelessness* or at least confusion toward the future. Instead, Mrs. Mallard—who ironically is *not given a first name,* Chopin's emphasizing the ''Mrs.,'' Mallard's married state—is filled with **''the delicious breath of rain,'' ''the notes of a distant song,'' and ''sparrows . . . twittering in the eaves''** Who would expect that in the midst of death, *images of beauty arise*?

ACTIVITY

1. What are the *main points* of this body?
2. How is the reader beginning to change his or her mind about Mrs. Mallard?
3. Write the *second body of your analysis.*

Literary Analysis

Third Body

Third Body = Same as First and Second

[The protagonist's *thoughts, her internal monologue*, are what surprise readers the most. Mrs. Mallard realizes that she is in a "**suspension of intelligent thought.**"] **(T.S.)** As readers, we *might conclude that she wishes not to consciously dwell on what will follow death*—from the details of funeral arrangements to the sad reshaping of a world cut in two. *What Mrs. Mallard thinks of, though* —and actually says aloud to herself—is that she is "**free, free, free!**" Just as we begin to wonder, as the idea takes shape in our minds, that there might have been some *conflict in this marriage* that has ended so abruptly, our suspicions are confirmed. We learn that "**her eyes . . . [are] keen and bright,**" that she "**opened and spread her arms out to them (the years to come) in welcome,**" as she has already, so soon, come to think of them as "**years that would belong to her absolutely.**" Her mind is almost instantly grabbing on to—ironically as if to a *lifeboat* rather than a sinking ship—the promise that she will be "**Free! Body and soul free!**"

ACTIVITY

1. Explain how Mrs. Mallard's thoughts are ironic.
2. Write the third body of your analysis.

Conclusion

Conclusion = Restatement of Thesis

Mr. Mallard's appearance at the end of the story makes the irony come full circle. Just as *news of her husband's supposed death brings her to life*—''**with spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own**''—*his actual living causes her death.* Chopin expertly puts a name to it, a handle for us to grasp, as she calls it ''**the joy that kills,**'' an irony in and of itself. [Mrs. Mallard's actions, environment, and internal monologue that indicate her expectations for a full new life ironically end as abruptly as they have begun.] **(Concluding Sentence)**

ACTIVITY

1. What has the author accomplished with the passages that precede the restatement of the thesis?
2. Write the conclusion for your essay.

Magic Three as a Method of Elaboration and Voice

A *magic three* is three parallel groups of words with modifiers or completers that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point.

EXAMPLES:

1. My shiny, white patent-leather shoes pranced in, making our grand entrance, my ponytails flapped in the breeze, and my hair ribbons were ironed stiff, standing like soldiers at attention.
2. For now—test time—pencils were poised, proctors were in place, and my mind was blank. I knew nothing. I remembered nothing. I would be nothing for the rest of my life.
3. Stainless-steel pots and pans Daddy gave Mama one Christmas. Mama had wanted a flowing silk negligee or perfume smelling of the Orient or sweet, dark chocolates—the expensive kind—that she could taste long after the candy itself was gone. Instead she got copper bottoms and a year's warranty.
4. He loved her long ebony hair, her angelic expression, and her stick-like arms and legs. She was a girl not yet formed, a clay-girl waiting for the sculptor to finish.
5. We had experienced loneliness even then—only children playing paper dolls cut from magazines or building houses in the woods with pine-needle walls or assigning ourselves roles in intricate plays while our parents busied themselves with things parents do.

ACTIVITY

Together as a class, identify the main words of each magic three.

Metaphor

A *metaphor* is a comparison between two essentially unlike things not using "like" or "as."

EXAMPLES:

1. License-plate games, road-sign diversions, name-that-tune—we all tried valiantly but lost interest as we watched a seemingly never-ending snake of taillights wind its way in front of us.
2. The wind had come alive, a vicious animal clawing its way into our lives, cutting a swath across our land.
3. Judy's hand is a supersonic jet on a steady path upward, the first to answer Mr. Peterson's question.
4. Richard swears that his lucky number is nine. Little does he know that I am a number that has not been invented yet, a number hanging in midair, a number born of the sun and moon and stars.
5. A twelve-year-old can't beat down words, especially top-secret ones, especially ones whispered by malicious girls who turned themselves into covert agents to spy on your every move.
6. Funny what things momentarily wedge themselves in your mind and hang on tight, mountain climbers they are or maybe high-wire aerialists, hands meeting for that precious second over the net.

ACTIVITY

Choose three of these metaphors and explain the comparisons.

Metaphor Quick Write

EXAMPLE:

Sammy and I would start off after school or on Saturdays or Sundays, riding our bikes leisurely up and down his straight concrete driveway and around and around my circular oyster-shell one. At first we'd simply be Sammy and Steve, two friends, out for a bicycle stroll. We could have been two old gray-haired men walking with our silver-tipped canes, reminiscing about our youth. But then—maybe the ninth or tenth time up and down or around and around— something would snap and we'd let out whoops and cries, Indians on the warpath, and let the wind blow our hair as we increased our speed. We'd chase each other over wooded paths, we'd virtually fly on our bikes. "No hands!" we'd yell in unison, and we'd continue through rain, traffic, and Nathan Pheneger's dog snapping at our heels. Then, as if by unspoken agreement, we'd once again resume our slower pace—old men again till we were called to dinner.

ACTIVITY

1. Quote the metaphors used.
2. Do a five-minute Quick Write about something you love to do, a person you like to spend time with, an adventure you've had, something you weren't supposed to do, or a time you accomplished something against all odds.

Mood

Part #1

Mood is the *reader's response to a work*. Usually the tone and mood are similar (for example, if the piece is humorous in its tone, the mood will be humorous as well). However, *sometimes they differ* (for example, when an author intends to write a story serious in its tone, it might offend someone; therefore, that reader's mood would be hurt or belligerent).

EXAMPLE:

> I hate being thirteen! Mama always said that when I turned thirteen I'd be a woman and I'd have a whole new life. I'd shed my old one like snakeskin and turn into a model or a movie star or anyone I wanted, but all I see when I look in this mirror is the same old me.
>
> I try the hair first, pinning it up in the latest style. I just end up looking like I have rolled around on the floor. The Pretty in Pink lipstick doesn't work either. Women's lips are full and pouty, and truly some handsome man would want to kiss their pinkness. Mine look like slits, just something I talk through or eat with, and the kissing part I can't imagine. Who even cares if two straight lines are pink or blue or even there at all?

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

Using clues from the piece, predict what the mood will be.

Mood Prediction

Part #2

(Continued from previous page.)

I try the ''in'' outfit part, too, as if it will transform me, but I'm still a string bean of a girl, as Daddy says. He says to be glad I'm not all soft and curvy and filled out. He says there's plenty of time for soft and curvy and filling out. I say it's now or never.

Right now, in my room, I'm glad I'm the only lifeless witness to my lifeless thirteen. You know, maybe Mama's right, and I'll have a whole new life and be anyone I want. But for now all I see is Daddy's string-bean girl trying to be something she's not.

ACTIVITY

1. What would you say the *overall mood* of the piece is?
2. Quote at least *three examples* to support your choice.

Motif

Motif is a theme, image, or subject that recurs in a work.

EXAMPLE:

Fairyland—what Mama called the lights of a big city—is what a country girl gets to see if she's lucky. It's like all those stars atop all those buildings that reach higher than the sky itself could imagine.

So when Mike and I crossed the three-mile bridge to Galveston, when I looked back and saw all those skyscrapers with all their lights, I said "Fairyland," and Mike knew Mama and her ways and said he'd take me to a place where stars don't stop shining ever.

The thought of it filled me with wonder, but I didn't say and scooted closer to Mike, turned up the radio, and sang along, thoughts of Mama as far away as those city lights, as that Fairyland of hers.

Soon we were on Broadway, and its oleander perfume filled the car, along with the neon glow of flashing signs advertising "TWO T-Shirts for the Price of ONE!" accompanied by other car radios turned up so loudly it was like a music war.

Once we headed off Broadway down Sixty-Fourth to the seawall we were engulfed by bikini girls—bright sun-red bodies with strips of winter-white peeking out—scrawny guys on skateboards, caps lowered, riding the concrete surf, and old people with pants rolled up, carrying shoes and socks and covered in hats and scarves and sweaters. Could have been Alaska instead.

But finally Mike stopped the car, and we climbed the old bunker hill, him pulling me up and up and up until at last, the pinnacle reached, we sank to the grass, hugging our knees, our heads tilted back to take it all in.

"See, now *this* is Fairyland," he said. And I knew he was right.

ACTIVITY

What is the *motif* of this piece?

Motivation

Motivation, the *reason why a character does something,* can arise from the character's personality, experiences, or situations.

EXAMPLE:

Mama's best friend, Mrs. Kelly, used to tell Mama that talking to her husband was like being in a void, an insurmountable space surrounding her every word, her every thought. That one night at dinner maybe she was tired of her own voice reverberating, going nowhere in the thin air. Perhaps that one night she had had enough, so she threw a barbecued pork chop at her husband's left temple, grazing his head, but leaving no blood, only an indecipherable look on Mr. Kelly's face. Mrs. Kelly thought it to be a cross between a sneer and apathy. Mrs. Kelly sat back, wiped her hands on her napkin, and realized that her favorite picture, the one with miles of ocean—empty except for a pure white yacht flying a robin's-egg-blue flag—had been where the chop came to rest. No glass was broken, the yacht's course still defined, but now in the middle of all that blue space lay the red stain of a barbecued pork chop. At least that's what she told Mama, with all us kids glued to the closed kitchen door.

ACTIVITY

1. What do you think Mrs. Kelly's *motivation for her action* is?
2. How is the *ending unexpected*?

Name

When students write about their own name, it is more than a character sketch. It is the story of *who they are* and *perhaps who they would like to be*.

EXAMPLE:

Emily is like lavender and lace, an old-fashioned name, one for ladies of other centuries, ladies who recline on verandas, sipping sherry in their afternoons, watching their children play croquet in spotless white linen. Emily belongs in long hoop skirts and lace bodices with so many buttons and eyelets to fasten that another set of hands is required. A silk, ruffled parasol is her outdoor companion, serving as protection from the sun, so porcelain-like is her delicate skin. When those indolent afternoons are too drowsy to be endured, Emily is nestled amongst down comforters, perhaps reading *Wuthering Heights*.

Emily is not somber or bitter, like serious matters spoken of behind closed doors, but rather like a soft rain or a surprise or that perfect word said at the perfect time. Would Emily be anyone else, perhaps she would try on Caitlin or Gwendolyn or Cassandra. Yes, she might wear those names for a day, swishing about, playing out the fantasy, letting her new name slip like a secret from her rosebud lips. No matter what, though, she'll always return to Emily, like lavender and lace, an old-fashioned name.

ACTIVITY

1. Quote phrases that are examples of *sensory imagery*.
2. Do a Quick Write about *your name*.

Narrative

Setting, Characters, Conflict

A *narrative* is a story with *rising actions,* a *climax,* and usually a *falling action.* It can be told from *first-person point of view, third person, omniscient,* or *limited omniscient.*

EXAMPLE:

Jason sat Indian-style on my parents' living room floor while I lay back on Mama's new mint-green carpet, my feet in Jason's lap and my focus fixed on Mama's ceiling. She had asked for sparkle paint in the same shade as the carpet, which matched the walls that were echoed by the ceiling. It was supposed to give the illusion of stars twinkling, and I must admit it did a pretty darn good imitation. I was pretending Jason and I were alone in some lavender field somewhere like, say, Scotland, where there were no prying eyes, no water glasses with eavesdropping ears attached held up to the walls to make out any conversation, and no "Yoo-hoo, kids, we're coming through."

When I had any male friend over, my parents suddenly developed bladder problems, which meant constant trips to the bathroom, or they had an inexplicable urge to dust the bedroom, search for the Holy Grail or Big Foot or the Black Hole.

"Anyway, here we come, ready or not," my mother's voice would sing out as Daddy would clear his throat so many times that I would lose count.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. With a partner, identify the *scene, characters, conflict,* and *point of view.*
2. Quote three examples of *voice.*
3. How could most teenagers identify with the story so far?

Narrative

Furthering Conflict in Rising Action

(Continued from previous page.)

I think that a decade ago when my parents designed our house, they made sure that wherever I'd be entertaining the opposite sex—years down the line—would be accessible by as many doors as one room could accommodate. In this case six. Six doors in one room for three people.

I'm surprised that they didn't install those cameras like at banks or expensive stores and that hidden sound equipment and a booth somewhere, where my parents could drink their aperitifs, have some cheese and crackers, and glue themselves to every syllable, every movement their fifteen-, sixteen-, and now seventeen-year-old daughter made.

I'm sure that if these monitoring devices had been widely available back then, Daddy would have been the neighborhood trailblazer, even perhaps setting up a Pine Drive Command Center manned alternately by Mr. Richards, Mr. Tindale, and Old Man Netterville.

As I gazed at Mama's sparkles, I could just hear the warning that could have been blaring down from some covert device, "Ellie, foot massage is not allowed. Remember the motto: pleasure prohibited."

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What is the overall *tone* of this passage?
2. One method of characterization is *inner thoughts and feelings*. How does the author use the narrator's inner thoughts to advance the conflict?
3. This part of the rising action reveals the *age of the narrator*. What is it?
4. Why do you think the author has chosen to use *two fragments for effect*?

Introduction of Second Conflict and More Insight into Characters

(Continued from previous page.)

Jason suddenly scooped me up into his arms, positioned me in front of him, putting his left arm around my waist while thrusting his right arm—my left arm in tow—to board-straight at shoulder level.

It must have been that crazed look I'd mastered so well, using my parents as targets. Or maybe it was the way my whole body stiffened as if I were being led to a guillotine or a gangplank or alligator-infested waters. Or maybe it was when I almost bit his ear off in an attempt to whisper so that the whole adult community wouldn't be on code red.

Whatever it was, Jason made me realize that he was ready once and for all to teach the unteachable, to train the untrainable, to lead someone who could not follow. His mission was to make me a dancer, make me prom-ready, make me confident, with magic fairy feet and rhythm to rival that of any dancer who had gone before me.

My expression had turned to an I-surrender-I'll-do-anything-if-you'll-give-this-up look of pure fear. His expression was we're-doing-this-whether-you-like-it-or-not.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What is another *conflict* that has arisen?
2. What *tone* does the author use to confront the conflict?
3. Quote passages that prove the writing has *voice.*
4. How can we now *characterize* Jason?

Characters' Reaction to Conflict

(Continued from previous page.)

He was whispering into my ear now. What was it he was saying? Something about following his feet, my right foot first, my body tall and straight, my head held high.

On that musicless night there were plenty of bone-crushing missteps, teetering until we almost both toppled, and curses I only thought, not voiced.

After almost two hours, we had swooped and swayed and dipped and twirled with a little funny footwork in between. I was surprised we hadn't cut a swath up and down Mama's mint-green carpet, and I was equally surprised at Jason's tenacity and my sheer willpower. Perhaps the biggest surprise of all was that we had accomplished this without adult interference.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. How has *Jason's character* changed even more?
2. How would you *characterize the narrator*?
3. How is the *reaction to the conflict* not "normal"?
4. Quote passages that make this good writing.

Introduction of Minor Character and Continued Conflict

(Continued from previous page.)

Just as I was feeling like I was ready for *Dancing with the Stars,* my best friend, Diane, burst in with a ''Hi, what's going on?''

Jason's face brightened like a father who had taught his three-year-old the intricacies of riding a tricycle, and my face wasn't far behind, beaming like the three-year-old who—from *her* eyes at least—had conquered the universe.

Jason wrapped his arm around me, and united we stood—that is, until Diane said, ''Let's put on some fast music, and you two can show me.''

The words ''fast,'' ''music,'' and ''show'' made it out of her mouth to my ears but apparently not to my brain. I stood frozen like a zombie, like someone from another universe who had no idea what those three words meant.

Jason, though, was already going through the CDs choosing his favorites. The problem was that Jason hadn't taught me anything but slow dancing, with only his rhythm to follow and with only him as my audience.

My palms instantly turned clammy, my feet found their way to a stubborn pigeon-toed position, and my temples were dancing to a beat of their own—something that must have been titled ''Ellie Has a Breakdown.'' There was nothing to do but sink to the floor.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What purpose does the *minor character* serve?
2. What are the *new conflicts*?
3. Quote passages that exemplify how the author is maintaining *the overall tone of the piece*.

Climax and Falling Action

(Continued from previous page.)

I had to give Jason credit. He realized what was happening, put on a song, and said, "Diane, let's us dance while Ellie rests a bit."

Diane had a smile reserved only for the confident Dianes of the world and started gyrating, flinging her arms about, and moving her head side to side and up and down with such enthusiasm that I expected it to turn, *Exorcist*-style, completely around on her shoulders.

I watched spellbound.

At the end of the first CD, Diane almost yanked my arm out of its socket as she pulled me to my feet. "All together now," she commanded, General Custer leading his troops.

The strangest thing happened, though. My feet were no longer my feet, my arms had a life of their own, and my head, too, was dangerously in trouble of falling off my body. Whatever Diane did, I did. I was her mirror image. When she yelled, I gave my best Injun war whoop, and I was the queen of gyrating.

No one even noticed my parents' entrance, so, needless to say, their applause scared us almost to the point of completely immobilizing us.

I could tell that they knew this might have been an ordinary day for Jason and Diane, but it was a victory for me. Something told me I wouldn't be sitting out any dances from now on—slow, fast, or in between.

ACTIVITY

1. What do you think is the *climax or turning point*? Why?
2. What is the *falling action*?
3. What are some *possible themes*?
4. How does the author come *full circle* in a way?

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the formation of a word that sounds like the noise to which it refers.

EXAMPLE:

> The boy everyone called Thunder was a formidable fighter. Bystanders reported every punch, crack, pop, bang, hiss, and whoosh he made while wrestling his opponents to the finish. Thunder's famous thwonks to the head could be heard in the next county as the buzz and whirr of the audience's reactions permeated the stands. His fans actually looked forward to the clinks, clanks, and snorts emanating from their hero, and they listened in rapt attention for the final squeak of the lesser one's defeat.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Underline the *onomatopoetic words*.
2. With the help of a partner, list ten more examples of onomatopoeia or use some of those in the example to *write your own paragraph*.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are used on many *state tests* as a strategy to assess students' understanding of a piece of literature.

Prompt: In the following excerpt from Jesse Stuart's "Thanksgiving Hunter," explain how the narrator solves his conflict. Support with examples from the text.

☞ It is not necessary for students to have read the story to understand the construction of the response.

EXAMPLE #1:

In "Thanksgiving Hunter," the narrator solves his conflict by being true to himself by not choosing to participate in the sport of hunting. **(Answer)** Instead of following in the footsteps of his Uncle Wash, a man who encourages the sport, the young narrator goes against the grain. Even though the boy remembers "how Uncle Wash had taken care of his gun, how he had treated it like a living thing," the boy is ultimately more affected by the beauty of nature rather than by nature as a sport. **(Support with Quote)** The narrator "felt the sun's rays against [his] face and the sun was good to feel," establishing for the reader the narrator's connection with nature rather than a feeling of separation, one that would allow the killing of so much fragility. **(Support with Quote)** It is ironic that the boy—not the man—sees past the sport of hunting and instead hears and feels the struggle of living things. **(Insight)**

ACTIVITY

1. Explain in your own words what the *conflict* is and why Jesse goes "against the grain."
2. How is the last sentence an example of *insight/identification/universal theme?*

Open-Ended Question

"The Physicians of Trinidad"

EXAMPLE #2:

Based on your reading of "The Physicians of Trinidad," do you think Billy the Kid was affected by Sister Blandina? Support your answer with examples from the text.

> *In "The Physicians of Trinidad," Billy the Kid's life is without a doubt affected by Sister Blandina.* **(Answer)** One testimony to the effect that the sister has on the young Billy is the fact that this notorious criminal says to her, *"It would give me pleasure to be able to do you any favor."* His words are not empty; he does indeed spare the lives of all four of the physicians. **(Support with Quote)** Not only is Billy the Kid uncharacteristically moved to save a life rather than to take one, he is also affected by the Sister as a person. When he is jailed for the last time, he tells her, *"I wish I could place a chair for you, Sister."* **(Support with Quote)** A man who was prepared to scalp four men now sees the need to be courteous to the Sister. *Perhaps men can change, and evil can turn to good.* **(Insight)**

ACTIVITY

Answer the *open-ended question* that your teacher will write on the board concerning the novel chapter, story, or poem your class has just read.

Paradox

A paradox is a statement that on the surface *seems to be contradictory* but on closer examination *can be explained*.

EXAMPLES:

- I have everything, yet nothing.
- I've lived in this one town forever but have never really seen it, have never really known it.
- Although he's six foot five—a strapping young man—he feels small, very small indeed.
- We have been going together for five years, and I love him totally, but that part of him that I simply cannot stand grows more significant by the day.
- Not wanting to hurt me, he whispered that it was over between us. That one little sentence took up more space, was louder than anything I had ever heard.
- When Daddy pointed out the vastness of space to me when I was a child, he told me how we were mere specks on the planet. I remember turning to him, my hand in his, and saying, ''But you said I was the most important thing in the world, but I'm really just a speck?''

ACTIVITY

Choose two of these examples and explain how these contradictions could actually be true.

Pathetic Fallacy

Part #1

Pathetic fallacy occurs when nature or the environment mirrors a character's feelings.

EXAMPLE

☞ **NOTE:** The environment and nature mirroring the characters' emotions appears mostly on the next page.

Mark had planned it down to the dessert before they even set foot into Demarco's, a five-star restaurant that was the talk of the town.

At the precise moment the cake with "I Will Love You Forever" written in white-chocolate icing was placed in front of Jenn, Mark actually got down on one knee and proposed. The old-fashioned way.

The will-you-marry-me question, the oh-Mark-of-course-I-will answer complete with the hugs and kisses were followed by Mark's opening a pristine white box—the expensive jewelry-store kind—that holds only expensive things like rings. There nestled in peach satin was the most exquisite engagement ring Jenn had ever seen. Mark explained that he had had it made, that it had taken ten weeks, that it was a three-carat marquee diamond in a platinum setting, the latest thing.

By now both Jenn and Mark were on their feet as he slipped the object of art on his bride-to-be's finger, and it really qualified as something people would stand in line to view, maybe like the Queen's jewelry or a fine painting or a famous sculpture. Mark's final gesture was met with applause. It was as if even the restaurant gods approved.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Use *three adjectives* to describe Mark's and Jenn's feelings.
2. For each adjective, *quote two supports*.

Pathetic Fallacy

Part #2

(Continued from previous page, with passage of the environment and nature exemplifying the characters' emotions.*)*

As Mark and Jenn stepped out of the most perfect restaurant from having had the most perfect time of their lives, they found that the night must have been listening in. The air was just cool enough to put even more of a radiant blush into Jenn's cheeks, and when the two looked to the heavens it was as if someone had turned on all the lights just for them. The moon, too, was at its best, round and yellow-gold as if it had put on a special cloak of finery just for them. The whole night had been theirs, and even nature rejoiced.

ACTIVITY

1. List the ways that the *environmen*t emphasizes the characters' feelings.
2. How does *nature* do the same?

Peer Editing

A necessary step in the writing process is *editing*, and when it is done by the writer's peers **(as well as by the writer him- or herself),** *two advantages* are immediately evident. Students have the chance to read the work of others in order to *compare their own* as well as to have the opportunity to *practice identifying voice* and *errors.*

> In this land, the ground was bloodshot-red, and there were no plants. There were fire springs instead of water springs. I thought this place might have been known as the world of isolation. Suddenly I felt heat waves shooting at me like speeding bullets. Then I saw a grotesque thing fly towards me like a bow and arrow seeking its prey. I just couldn't let anything stop me from finding Ashley and getting out of here. I took cover under an immense boulder then spotted something resembling an enormous cocoon lying on the ground, and I heard mumbled words almost saying, ''Amber, save me. Get me out of here!''

—Dana Defelice, Grade 5, Silver Run, Millville, NJ;
Donna Kortvelesy, Professional Development Specialist.

ACTIVITY

☞ Fold a piece of paper into fourths. *On the front of one fourth*, a responder quotes any passages of *voice*. *On the back, the responder lists any errors.* This method is called *Chairs*, reflecting the fact that when a responder is finished with one writer's work, the responder circulates around the room to the next of four writers' chairs until all four sections are complete.

☞ Responders leave the folded compilation of notes to each writer on the writer's desk.

Personalizing Current Events: Turning Nonfiction into Fiction

Current events often have an even greater effect on readers if they can *personalize* the nonfiction piece written as a *newspaper* or *magazine article* or *special interest selection.*

EXAMPLE:

After Emily fixed her customary cup of English Breakfast tea and sat down at her desk to focus on her day, she rearranged the flowers her husband John had sent her for her birthday; lovingly ran her hand along the smooth, sterling-silver frame containing a picture of her husband, her five-year-old daughter Katie, and herself; and walked to the expansive windows of her office in the World Trade Center to meditate, to be thankful for her many blessings. Today, though, she thought she spied some foreign object in the sky, and it seemed to be heading straight for her and her alone. Maybe it was her imagination. Maybe it was the light. For some reason Emily found herself repeating her childhood mantra, ''And now I lay me down to sleep.''

ACTIVITY

1. How does this piece personalize a tragic event?
2. Using a news story from TV, a newspaper, or magazine, do a ten-minute Quick Write turning the piece into a fiction vignette.

Personification

Personification is giving human attributes to inanimate objects.

EXAMPLES:

1. I used to volley my questions between my parents like a tennis match. ''Ask your mom,'' Daddy would say. ''Ask your daddy,'' Mama would say. Finally, I learned to drop the subject and shuffle back to my room, the ball and my question dead on the court.
2. I want new hair, hair that doesn't have a mind of its own, hair that is docile, afraid of me, ready to be anything I please.
3. Last night that long piece of highway stretched itself out before me, almost daring me to continue once it had seen me yawn.
4. ''Come in to town with us tonight, Mama,'' Joe and I had said. ''We'll go out to eat and catch a movie. It'll be fun.'' But Mama wasn't having any of it. ''When you get older,'' she sighed, ''you just want to stay home, watch your TV shows. They're your friends, these shows, familiar, coffee-drinkers-in-your-kitchen-on-Saturday-morning friends.'' She settled back in her chair, reaching for the remote.

ACTIVITY

1. As a class, discuss what makes each of these excerpts an example of personification. In other words, *identify the human trait(s)*.
2. Write your own example of *personification*.

Persuasive Writing

Introduction

Persuasive writing is meant to convince the reader to believe in an *argument* or a line of *reasoning* presented.

Introduction = *"Hook"* **(Attention-Getter)** and *Thesis* containing the *Main Points* to be covered in the essay

EXAMPLE:

As the lyrics to a popular song go, "If given a choice between sitting it out and dancing, I hope you dance." We can apply this to our own lives by being a proponent of not "sitting it out" but participating, especially in the arena of listening. If we put ourselves and our own problems on hold for a moment and let others have their say, we just might find that we like this active art of "dancing"—or in this case, listening—and that we feel better about ourselves. By listening, we can support people at school, at home, and in our community.

ACTIVITIES

1. Identify the *hook* and the *thesis*, putting a check mark on each point to be covered.
2. After brainstorming with your class, choose a topic and write your own *persuasive introduction* for a five-paragraph paper.

Persuasive Writing

First Body

First Body = *Topic Sentence* (the first point in your thesis), *Three Main Points,* and *Elaboration* (see Methods of Elaboration and Smiley-Face Tricks)

EXAMPLE:

T.W. = Transition Word

T.P. = Transition Phrase

[*Listening at school has many advantages*.] **(Topic Sentence)** *When* **(T.W.)** we see a *friend* in the commons—head bent, obviously hoping to magically disappear—we should take time out and sit next to him. The actual physical closeness will mean the world to him—*his* world. Pretty soon that droopy flower will raise its head to the sun—to us—and a single word will emerge through clenched teeth. That one word will be followed by another and then another and finally a torrent of sentences will fly forth—right along with pent-up emotions. Listening has the power to bring the dead at heart back to life. *Besides our friends* **(T.P.)**, our *teachers* do have something to say, whether we believe it or not. Yes, they crawled a hundred miles barefoot in the snow to school, carrying all their siblings on their backs. When they begin their when-I-was-your-age stories, we should listen. Maybe there's a jewel hidden in all those tired adages. What, though **(T.W.)**, about *ourselves*? What about being still—very still—and listening to that elusive thing called a conscience? If we make it our I-swear-to-uphold-my-duty responsibility, we can trade in our horns for halos. *Listening is powerful.*

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Partner with a classmate and *underline the elaboration and voice* that make this paragraph different from a boring one.
2. Write your *first body*.

Persuasive Writing

Second Body

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

Why shouldn't we continue practicing our newly learned listening skills at home? Our parents, for example **(T.P.)**, might actually go into shock and have to be revived if we didn't breeze past them with closed ears. If we treated our parents as if they weren't just people who happened to have our same address, if we sought them out for advice, asked them for help with our homework, or even had a conversation about their day, we could put listening down on our résumés as a skill. *Who* **(T.W.)** could leave out our *siblings* in this act of benevolence? We might secretly wish that they were figments of our imagination, but they *do* exist, and so do their problems and needs. Instead of dropping threats like bombs or engaging in hand-to-hand combat, maybe a little understanding that comes from listening to their sides would be like waving a white flag of surrender. *Let's not forget* **(T.P.)** about our *neighbors*. When Mrs. Treemont peeks over the fence, maybe all that she'd like is a little company to listen to her and some help planting her petunias. What would be so bad about sharing a glass of lemonade with her and hearing about her day? *Once again, we can trade in our horns for halos just by listening.*

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss with the class how the elaboration adds to each subpoint.
2. Write your own second body.

Persuasive Writing

Third Body

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

Besides school and home **(T.P.)***, we have our community that is calling our names—if we would only listen. Maybe* **(T.W.)** our teacher has selected us to write an essay on friendship to be entered district-wide for the Lion's Club contest. Our first response might be "Nope, no time." If we stop for a minute and think about what he or she is really saying, our response should be different. We're hearing *extra work*. Our teacher is saying that *we're the best*. Who wants to disappoint someone who has faith in us? Or *perhaps* **(T.W.)** the Youth Fellowship at our church has decided to go to a nursing home at Christmas to bring some yuletide cheer to the elderly. Instead of making excuses, we should listen. The minister is talking about the needs of those less fortunate, and we might find it in our hearts to listen. *Then again* **(T.P.)**, the case could be something political or historical—putting together packages for our troops overseas or saving the grand old oak tree on Main Street. These acts aren't about us; they're about others. We would know this if we would listen, and if we happen to look in the mirror we just might get a glimpse of that ethereal halo proudly hovering over us like a badge of honor.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss how the author has used a *"smattering" of dialogue* as a method of elaboration.
2. Discuss what other methods are used.
3. Write your own *third body*.

Conclusion

EXAMPLE:

(Continued from previous page.)

We now have built a reputation for ourselves, one that Winston Churchill refers to in his belief that "I needed a new kind of courage—not the kind it takes to stand up and speak, but the kind it takes to . . . listen." We have shown those around us that we are willing to listen at school, home, and in the community.

ACTIVITY

1. Identify the *attention-getter* and *thesis*.
2. What is special about the attention-getter?
3. Write your own *conclusion*.

Picture Prompt Writing

Writing details about a picture is a good exercise in *description* as well as *other methods of elaboration.*

EXAMPLE:

The New Boy

"Army brat myself," Mr. Walker said to Jeff as he let the boy take in his new surroundings before the other students arrived. Jeff was immediately drawn to the windows and how his second-story view made him feel like he was in a tree house, like the ancient oak brushing against the panes would be his and his alone if he didn't tell anyone about the feeling of freedom that is the sky. Mr. Walker led Jeff to the reading corner—books with brand-new covers, bean bag chairs, journals in brightly colored baskets. He could picture himself kicked back, reading adventure stories, thinking, writing. Even the absence of a teacher's desk and in its place another student desk filled with Mr. Walker's books and lesson plans and grade book told Jeff this was going to be an experience he would enjoy. It all was beginning to spell "home." Even the posters covering what looked to be every square inch of the walls and even the ceiling had famous quotations that Jeff could get used to, might even memorize. Plants, field flowers in jars, memorabilia from pieces of lives were all brought by students, Mr. Walker told Jeff. When Jeff finally sat in his desk, he knew. This was a classroom that students were proud of. This, Jeff thought, just might be his favorite place of all.

ACTIVITY

Draw Jeff's new classroom.

Picture Prompt Rubric: Student-Interactive

Beginning

☞ To ensure that the necessary components are present in a work, students must fill out a *student-interactive rubric*, rather than a mere checklist.

☞ The following rubric is to be completed using the Picture Prompt on the previous page.

1. Explain how the *beginning sentence* could be an *attention-getter* for readers. (Remember that beginnings can take the form of description, internal monologue, setting, conflict, and so on.)
2. For picture prompts, *the initial sentence* (or two) should give readers an indication of the *overall setting* so that they can envision the scene. What is the setting and what are the clues?
3. Unless indicated by the teacher as a pictorial story starter, a picture prompt is *not* to be a *story or narrative*, but sometimes *conflict* can be inferred. What conflict is present? Quote the clue(s).
4. The *central character* and any *minor characters* are usually identified in the beginning—again, so that readers have a clearer idea of the "picture." Who are the two characters and what is their purpose in the piece?

ACTIVITY

Partner with a classmate to answer these questions.

Picture Prompt Rubric: Student-Interactive

Details

☞ The following questions are for the same Picture Prompt.

1. A *picture prompt*—like any descriptive piece—needs to have *details or points* explained in a *logical order* **(spatial, order of importance, and so on)**. What is the *first detail or point* that the author describes?
2. In the first detail or point, what gives it *voice*?
3. What is the *second detail or point* the author mentions?
4. What *elaboration* is used to help readers envision this one area?
5. Explain which of the other details or points you think are the best.

ACTIVITY

Partner with a different classmate and answer these questions.

Picture Prompt Rubric: Student-Interactive

Editing

☞ The following questions are for the same Picture Prompt.

1. Sometimes writers make the mistake of *describing things not in the picture*, details that perhaps they have *inferred*. Did this piece do that? If so, how can you prove it?
2. Explain what you think the *most memorable phrase* is and *why*.
3. More sophisticated writing—even in this mode—often has a *theme* **(a universal truth)** or an *epiphany*. Do you think this piece includes one? If so, what is it?
4. Which *word(s)* do you think the author probably looked up to check the spelling?
5. Quote three examples of sentences with *different comma rules* and *tell the rule* for each that the author would have to know.
6. Quote two other sentences with *other punctuation marks* and explain the *rules*.
7. Which detail or point could use more *elaboration*? *Improve the point* by including more specific information of your own.
8. Do you think the *title* is a good one? Write *three other titles* that could have been used.
9. Draw a sketch of what you think *the original picture* might have been, labeling the details.

ACTIVITY

Partner with yet another classmate to answer these questions.

Play-Doh Writing Game

Students enjoy a Play-Doh writing activity, as it allows them to work with their hands—sculpting an object—as well as matching a classmate's writing to the object.

ACTIVITY

Using Play-Doh, sculpt a figure in five minutes. Do a five- to ten-minute Quick Write in *any mode* as long as the reader can match your writing to your sculpture. Your teacher will collect the papers and hand them back out in a random fashion. Finally, students will circulate around the room until paper and sculpture can be matched.

Example Using a Top Hat as the Sculpted Item:

Top hat
a strange thing
to focus on
amidst vases and such
Jim
having arrived home
early
unexpectedly
from work
a top hat
turned upside-down
kid-leather gloves
neatly folded over
the rim
"Why here in
my vestibule?"
Jim wondered
and then he
heard them

his wife Sarah
and his father
long ago lost
to him
laughter
floating
in the drawing room
twirling
about Jim
like an invisible
ballerina
and then
out
the open
door

Poem Cut-Ups

An activity that demonstrates how writers can envision the order and usage of words is a *cut-up poem*.

EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED POEM: ACTIVITY

After your teacher places index cards with lines from a poem you haven't read on each desk, circulate around the room, creating your own poem, using the words from the index cards in any order you choose. Read yours to the class; then your teacher will read the original poem. Compare the versions.

Sunday afternoon at the Amarillo Hotel
Pa's smoking Cuban cigars
And dealing blackjack
He's losing as usual
But we don't care
Me and Pa
We got something more important
Than money
We got each other
And that's more than
Dimes and quarters and nickels
And even dollars
Pa looks up at me and winks
I wink back
Pa winks with both eyes
I can only do the left
So while he's playing
I practice
I put my book down
About some fancy lady
In some far-away town
And I hold my right eye closed

With my right index finger
To train it
Bad, bad eye
It won't do it on its own
I try again
And again
Several hundred agains
But there's no use
I go back to the fancy lady
And watching Pa
Just another Sunday afternoon
At the Amarillo Hotel

Poignancy

Poignancy is appealing to the *emotions* with a passage that is *touching*, one that affects the readers emotionally.

EXAMPLE:

Bobby said his mom would never say that anything he wondered about or had ideas about was silly, like so many of the other boys' moms did about their notions. He had heard it a million times in a million different households when one of the boys would say that he honest-to-god had seen the tracks of a spaceship the size of the Little League baseball field when he was cutting through the woods the other day and that he and the other boys would have to be extra careful on their scouting trips so as not to be overtaken by any Martians.

"Oh, don't be silly, honey," all the mothers would say, laughing at their sons' excitement.

Bobby had heard these other mothers take these tender adventures and break them in two. He grew used to listening for the sounds, wonderful stories and dreams and make-believe worlds snapping, like so many twigs underfoot. And he'd seen these boys find new dreams and ideas, and he'd heard the same snap again.

But not with his mother on those magical porch days. She had listened. She had believed.

ACTIVITY

1. *Underline* the poignant parts.
2. Discuss the *overall poignancy* to the piece.

Point of View: Omniscient

An omniscient point of view is told by a narrator who can see into the mind and heart of any character.

EXAMPLE:

Albert thinks how special it would be to teach a daughter about what he does for a living—applying scientific formulas, using facts and figures to make sense of his world. He would take his daughter to the edge of reason, just as he would take her to his beloved marshlands, her hand in his, her mind as pliable, as willing as those long marsh reeds swaying in the breezes off the coast.

Martha's thoughts are along different lines. She wants her daughter, the one that she'll have one day, to love the schoolyard with it sturdy, low-hanging branches where tow-headed Kyle, imaginary scepter in hand, rules his reluctant subjects at recess. How can a daughter of hers not feel her mother's own joy when little Susie is able to climb the red-lacquered slide with its two frightening, steel-grey bumps, and finally swoosh down like a baby bird from its nest?

Albert and Martha hold the dream of having a daughter in their hearts, and every day they say a little prayer.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain why this is an example of *omniscient point of view*.
2. Write a paragraph from this point of view.

Prediction

Part #1

Prediction is *speculating about future events* based on elements in the work.

EXAMPLE:

"Johnnie, may I see you at my desk? And please bring the assignment you're working on." Mrs. Collins spoke quietly while the other students were working.

Johnnie glanced up to notice a funny look on his teacher's face. Maybe she's just tired: too many students, too many papers.

"I'll be right there," Johnnie replied, "just as soon as I gather all my material." Half of his essay was spread out on his desk, and the rest crumpled somewhere in his binder.

Johnnie knew—or at least he thought he knew—what Mrs. Collins wanted. His English papers hadn't been the best in the class by any means, and Mrs. Collins was certain to give him tips on improving his current work, just as his classmates had done in all the response groups.

When he had gathered everything together, seated himself in the conference chair by her desk in the front of the room, and assumed a sheepish grin, Mrs. Collins's "funny look" turned to an even stranger one as tears formed at the corners of her eyes and made tiny rivers down her cheeks.

"Great," Johnnie thought, "I'm so bad I've made her cry."

ACTIVITY

Based on what has happened so far in the piece, what are several things that you could predict will happen? Be sure to give a basis for each speculation.

Prediction

Part #2

Predictions—like inferences—aren't always accurate. However, in the case of predictions, if a reader bases his or her assumptions on prior knowledge, the prediction is an informed one.

(Continued from previous page.)

Just as he was about to form tears of his own over his plight, Mrs. Collins pushed his last paper onto his desk, marked with a big "A+."

Johnnie thought there must be some mistake—probably Mrs. Collins's first mistake ever—or maybe April Fool's Day was coming early, like in November this year, but before he could run through any more possibilities for what was surely an error, Mrs. Collins told him, "For once, you wrote from your heart, Johnnie. You relived your grandfather's death right here on these pages, and I identified. My father died last year, and I felt the exact same way. I just want to thank you for putting my feelings into words."

It seemed that both teacher and student had forgotten about the current assignment, as Johnnie walked proudly back to his desk, turned to catch Mrs. Collins's smile, and decided that this new paper would be his best yet.

ACTIVITY

1. Had you *predicted the ending*? If not, how does it now make sense to use this ending as opposed to one that would point to yet another of Johnnie's failures to live up to Mrs. Collins's standards?
2. With a partner, list *five rules for dialogue* evident in these two pages.

Redundancy

Redundancy is unnecessary repetition.

EXAMPLE:

At 3 A.M. in the morning, I awoke with a thought in my head. In a brief moment, I determined or at least ascertained that it wasn't a thought in my head but a headache in my head. My physician, that is to say my medical doctor, on my last office visit in his actual office, said that sleep deprivation and lack of sleep often or most frequently is caused by stress or situations that cause anxiety or nervousness. I was in a state of disbelief and—I must admit—actually incredulous, since I really could not put much stock in his opinion derived from his examination or diagnosis. In other words, I did not see it as factually true. I dismissed his advice as well as his recommendation for a possible solution, not to mention his method of solving my health problem, and—concurrently at the same time—even my malady. I thought to myself that I must begin to commence the act of finding or locating another smart expert to alleviate or at the very least relieve my 3 A.M. in the morning headache, the one in my head.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Circle all the words or phrases that are *redundant*.
2. To prove that redundancy is not a writing trait to cultivate, write a fifty-word paragraph using at least *five redundant words or phrases*.

Repetition for Effect: One Trick for Voice

From Excerpt of Short Story

Repetition for effect is a stylistic device writers use to emphasize certain words or phrases.

EXAMPLE:

The first time Sarah's husband's parents came to visit she cleaned the apartment for hours. She wanted everything to be perfect. She had made fried chicken and potatoes and black, black coffee just like her daddy liked—strong coffee, coffee that could hold its own.

Fighting coffee, her daddy would say when she was a child, and then he'd laugh and dip her great-grandmother's sterling silver teaspoon into the steaming cup, draw out a spoonful, and blow—short, funny little puffs of air. Sarah would squeal in delight and help her daddy blow on Great-Grandmother's spoon—short, funny little puffs of air until the blackness cooled. Then it was always the same. Her daddy would test the liquid and pronounce it done, and Sarah would take a tiny, an ever so tiny sip, wrinkle her nose, and laugh and squeal and laugh and squeal and hug her daddy tight.

ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the *effect* of the repeated phrases?
2. Write a short paragraph using at least *three repetitions for effect.*

Repetition for Effect

Sentence Practice

EXAMPLES:

1. He must not have seen the blood, he must not have seen my toe, and he must not have seen me hobble to the bathroom.
2. No one realized how scared he was, how he shook, or how he managed to finally make his way to the front of the class.
3. Beth knew she shouldn't have stayed out past her curfew, she knew she would be punished, and she knew the you're-in-trouble-now-young-lady look her father would be wearing as she opened the front door.
4. He saw no way out, no trap door, no escape hatch. He was on his own—that is except for the eight-hundred-pound bear staring at him as if he were an appetizer on a menu.
5. Kelsey felt herself falling deeper into a trance, into a coma maybe, or at the very least into oblivion.
6. Jack really didn't know why he had given Kellie the necklace. Maybe it was because she was the most beautiful girl in school or because he had had a crush on her since first grade or because he simply wanted to impress her. Whatever the reason, he realized that he was glad he had done it.

ACTIVITY

1. Underline the examples of *repetition for effect.*
2. Write three more sentences, using different repeated words from the examples.

Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences are two or more sentences run together without the proper punctuation. A run-on can be corrected by a *period, semicolon, comma and conjunction,* or *adverb clause.*

EXAMPLES:

1. My mom appeared lost. She just didn't understand yet that life is an Indian giver, life is greedy, it grants you with one hand, it swipes from you with the other.
2. The wind ferociously plucked leaves from the trees and scattered them as they danced like whirly-birds. One by one, they landed on the cold, moist ground. Like little helicopters, they corkscrewed down through the air, the wind turned around.
3. A sunny day can be gone in a clap of thunder then your window is useless. The sun catcher and crystals are delicate and breakable, the velvet is expensive and valuable, maybe not in money but in sentimental value.
4. Eddie is a man's man, a tough boy of fifteen, Lawrence is small and frail, barely up to Eddie's chin. When the boys steal the farmer's boat, Eddie immediately jumps into the water, giving no thought to his attire.

ACTIVITY

As a class, correct the run-on sentences and any other errors.

Science Fiction

Setting and Characters

Science fiction is a form of fiction that imaginatively uses some element of scientific knowledge or speculation in its plot, setting, theme, and so on.

☞ Students will be more successful if their narrative has science fiction elements embedded in real-life situations. If not, the piece loses credibility and usually depends on preposterous characters, situations, and so on with which readers cannot identify.

Rising Action:

As I was staring out the window one rainy Friday night, there he was—a tabby cat out of nowhere. Looking slightly bewildered and at the same time, I swear, bemused, he sat in the middle of the driveway as if he had just been dropped there by a spaceship or something. Little did I know then that was precisely what had happened.

When I opened the back door and called, ''Here, kitty, kitty,'' he stood on his hind legs, stretched his body to an amazingly great length, and strode confidently into my kitchen.

It was his demeanor that I took note of first. The image that came to mind was that he carried himself like a concert pianist, used to applause, admiration, and—of course—center stage. It wasn't that he was arrogant; it was more like I could envision him in a tux, bowing to his appreciative audience. He would then throw back his significant mane and position his paws before Beethoven, Bach, or whatever came to his mind danced across the keyboard.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. How does the author embed elements of science fiction into a world with which readers can identify?
2. Which phrases or sentences show a strong voice?

Science Fiction

Unfolding of Plot: Rising Action #2

(Continued from previous page.)

That first night, as I led him into the living room, he looked around, complimented my taste in shabby chic décor, and placed himself on one of my overstuffed sofas, crossing his legs, settling down it seemed to tell his story.

I learned that his home planet was so tiny that not even the most intricate, the most advanced systems of ours could detect it. After all, its inhabitants—felines of every kind, shape, size, and disposition—were elusive creatures, here one minute, gone the next. Their own scientists had concluded that since every one of the planet's citizens could jet from one end of the planet to another in less time than it took them to say "catnip," zooming from star to star—picking one to play with as if it were an astrological mouse—and be back to nap, dreaming of butterflies and grassy fields and bright sunny days, they would be but mere specks if they were by chance captured on film that Earth had not yet perfected.

"How purrfect for us," he said. His whiskers twitched and his tail did little loops as it hung ever so delicately off my linen sofa.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What *components of science fiction* are revealed in this part of the narrative?
2. The narrator is using elements of *comparison or contrast* to establish the differences in the *characters' environments*. Name several.
3. Quote several sentences that prove the piece has *voice*.

Science Fiction

Establishing Conflict: *Rising Action Introducing Conflict*

(Continued from previous page.)

I found that the very night I opened my house to him, my heart and my mind soon followed.

We'd have long talks, Walter and I. I'd tell him how strange and alien I felt compared to everyone else—my colleagues, my neighbors, even my friends. ''Ironic, isn't it?'' I'd ask him. ''Me, an alien right here on Earth.''

Walter would narrow his eyes, his face assuming a look of contemplation, and would assure me that these feelings of alienation happen everywhere—even on his own planet but to a much lesser degree. He suggested that I study my Earthly feline friends, that their independence, their seeming aloofness could actually save me.

I pictured myself becoming one of them, being stroked on the head and disappearing to my favorite secret spots to be left alone with my thoughts, not caring about anything else except—of course—if my face were sufficiently licked and cleaned. It was our first evening together, and I was already learning something valuable.

I showed Walter to the guest room for a well-deserved rest, having traveled who knows how many light-years.

The next day when he arose, quite ready to make some discoveries of his own, I began my gifts to him.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What do readers learn about the *narrator*?
2. What advice does Walter give that could serve as a *universal theme*?
3. How is *suspense* created?

Science Fiction

Establishing Connection Between Characters

(Continued from previous page.)

We'd eat our meals in the formal dining room, Walter at one end of the table and me at the other. I taught him to eat with sterling silverware, drink from crystal glasses, and dab daintily at his mouth with fine linen napkins.

Since this was my house and my world on my planet, there we'd sit, sipping Perrier, his Kibbles and Bits replaced by filet mignon, and we'd get down to the nitty-gritty of conversation here on Earth.

I'd tell him that were we both of the Earth we would rattle on about weather and politics and jobs and kids, and that Earthlings never really talked about their feelings like he and I did every night. I would tell my furry friend over cappuccino that it seemed that no one cared about whether anyone was truly happy, and certainly no one discussed the nature of happiness.

Walter would swish his brandy in his glass and listen to all I had wrapped up inside me. He treated our time together as if my feelings, my ideas, were a gift that he had the privilege of opening every night. Not once did he roll his eyes. In fact, I saw a look of something I couldn't quite place—admiration maybe.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. In what ways do the *characters connect*?
2. How could a *reader identify*?
3. What *writing "tricks" for voice* were used?

Plan Purposed: *Plan of Action Revealed*

(Continued from previous page.)

Walter stood, walked to the buffet, and brought back two thin slices of white-chocolate cheesecake for us. As we let the creamy richness melt in our mouths, I found myself saying, "Maybe it's me. Maybe I've got it all wrong. Maybe it's just a silly idea to really know a person."

Walter shook his head, put a well-cared-for claw to his lips, and then answered as if the weight of my world depended on it. "I think the problem is that your people never really look, never really see. From what you say, your world is full of possibilities, occasions to interact, but people don't take their blinders off and see anything but their own little worlds."

We both took another bite of cheesecake and let it work its magic.

He continued with, "It's like Earthlings are programmed to be one thing, think a certain way, and not see beyond. And . . ." Another bite of cake followed the last.

"And those who do—like you—are like strays in our world. Others don't quite know what to do with you."

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

1. What is the narrator's plan to better her world?
2. How is Walter's response one from which we all could benefit?
3. What details has the author used to make the scene believable?

Rising Action Leading to Climax

(Continued from previous page.)

Walter and I spent the whole week mind-to-mind. We'd write and read and speak of what we had learned, how we felt about it all, how it affected us. These times were too good to be real. Somewhere in that part of me that knew but didn't want to know, I realized I wouldn't have Walter forever. At least not in his bodily form. I would have to carry his teachings with me. Savor them.

Just as I said before, Walter came to me on a Friday—and seven days had passed. As all this was coming together in my mind, it started to rain. Walter and I were having dinner, and he simply placed his napkin beside his fine china plate, stood up, gave me a whiskery kiss on my already wet cheek, and walked out the door, heading straight for the driveway.

(Continued on next page.)

ACTIVITY

What clues does the author give to let the reader know that the *climax is approaching?*

Science Fiction

Climax and Falling Action

(Continued from previous page.)

As the ship landed and Walter boarded the neon-green, polka-dotted stairs, he winked and waved, and called out something, something that sounded very much like a mantra, a chant of sorts. Maybe it was me. Maybe I imagined it after all.

But what I thought I heard was what I had always wanted to hear.

My dear friend seemed to call out, ''It will always be the same. Nothing will change. You must make the difference. You, you, you.''

I never saw Walter again, but on those rainy Fridays you could find me staring out the window, knowing that now I *could* make the difference. One person, one step, one feeling at a time—all thanks to a tabby cat who appeared out of nowhere.

ACTIVITY

1. What is the *climax* and how is it *credible*?
2. What is the *falling action* and how is it a *memorable one*?
3. Write your own version of what you think would be a *suitable climax* and *falling action.*

Sensory Images as a Method of Elaboration

Sight

Writers use *sensory images* to allow readers to experience the work through their senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound. This series explores the use of sensory imagery, beginning with sight.

EXAMPLE:

> *Lines, we say—silly old things, boring, no shape, no style, worthless. Maybe we don't give lines enough credit*. If we think back, way back to our *childhoods*, lines were part of what made us happy. We drew giant-sized lines on sidewalks with colored chalk to eventually form our beloved hopscotch patterns. Kick the stone. Hop over the line. We also made certain we colored in the lines, lined up against the wall by Miss Millerby's room on the way to recess, and made stick figures so perfect that we named them: my house, my mama and daddy, and the tree I climbed. All this fun came from lines. Oh, what a time we had. Besides our trying-to-be-a-grown-up years, we see lines everywhere we look even *now*. Whether math is our enemy or friend, lines still shout, "Hey, look at me!" They form squares and triangles and are the home for long division problems. Where would numerators and denominators be without lines? In trouble—that's where, with a capital "T," which itself comprises lines. That billboard advertising our favorite I-must-have-this product is no more than lines. One, two, three, four—count the lines. Maybe we don't give lines enough credit.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Quote your five favorite *sight images* in the example.
2. The paragraph is structured by using *past and present images*. Using sight images, write about a circle.

Sensory Images

Sound

EXAMPLE:

The train's whistle was far off in the distance, but the boys could still hear it. They had practiced putting their ears to the ground, listening for the rumbling, the slight—ever so slight—sound like thunder or the rush of stampeding horses or like the boys imagined the earth would sound if it started to crack open like a giant eggshell.

Their mothers had warned them so many times that they didn't even hear the words anymore. Pieces of adult admonitions floated in the air with all the boys as they hurried out their back doors, screens slamming with familiar bangs. "Dangerous," "Better not catch you," "Your father will" went in one ear, swam around a little, and made their way out the other ear. As the boys figured it, their ears had more important things to do, like thrilling to the shuffling of leather shoes against the metal of the trestle. Or straining toward the gurgling and swishing of the water underneath them making its way around and over rocks. Or the hushed, barely audible whispers they all made to make certain that the train never took them by surprise. And it never did. They were boys, after all, playing while they still had the chance.

ACTIVITY

List all the *sound imagery* the author uses.

Sensory Images

Touch

EXAMPLE:

Marci closed her eyes, wrapping a folded scarf around her head, just to make sure she didn't peek. The class had read about Helen Keller in school that day, and Marci had felt something she couldn't put into words. It was like a connection with her. Marci carefully began to move around her room. She felt one of the smooth knobs of her antique four-poster bed. Of course she had touched it before, but this time she ran her hands over it and imagined all the people who had slept in this bed, had taken the fine grains of the wood for granted, and Marci vowed she would study their beauty more closely. She made her way to her window seat and sat for a minute, feeling the warmth of the afternoon sun on her back, her arms, something she did often without ever really understanding how it calmed her. When Marci rose, she knew the most important place of all was waiting for her—her rocker, where she piled the books she was reading. Picking up the stack, she eased herself down, holding her treasures in her lap. It was then that she realized what she'd miss most—the words and how they arranged themselves on the page, how the long ones were next to shorter ones, how they all settled themselves into Marci's mind. She took off her scarf and thought of Helen Keller and how lucky Marci herself was.

ACTIVITY

From the vignette, make a list of all the *sensory images of touch.*

Sensory Images

Taste

EXAMPLE:

Joey made a list of all the food he didn't want for his birthday week—seven whole days, his mother had promised.

1. **Spinach**—Joey hates the stringiness of it, like eating green yarn that not only gags him but that gets stuck in his teeth as a constant reminder.
2. **Liver**—Joey has never actually tasted liver because he holds his nose while he shovels it in, but the texture and, he's certain, the smell remind him of what he thinks cat guts would be like if he poked them.
3. **Cabbage**—The smell alone could send Joey running for the woods. It's a cross between old socks and his history teacher's breath. He'd rather get knuckle-rubbed every day by Uncle Harry, whose hands are the size of baseball mitts.
4. **Beets**—If beets could be another color, Joey thinks they'd be black, the end of things. No new life could begin with beets and their something's-dead-in-here smell simmering on the back burner. Come to think of it, what's already living could go belly-up with just one whiff.
5. **Blue cheese**—In a restaurant once, Joey ordered blue cheese for his salad, thinking it would be fun to see cheese that is something besides yellow. He took a whopping bite of the stuff to taste it by itself and had to do the napkin trick. When his mother told him it was supposed to have mold on it, Joey had to do the bathroom trick.

ACTIVITY

List two foods you don't like and explain what they taste like.

Sensory Images

Smell

EXAMPLE:

Rachel thought of her grandmother, whom she'd see in three short days. There was something about Grandma Eileen, something glamorous, exciting, daring. When Eileen—she insisted Rachel drop the ''Grandma'' part—was around, everything took on a different life. All Eileen had to do was make a grand entrance in the morning, smelling of different exotic flowers and far-away places, and everything else was on freeze-frame. Rachel's dad's clove cigarette couldn't compete, making a final bubble of sweetness in the air before it finally gave up. Rachel's mother's famous breakfasts of chicory coffee, pancakes smothered in maple syrup, and sausages with their hickory scents all wafting in one door and out another—tempting every taste bud within the entire neighborhood radius—became ordinary, almost like cereal straight from the box. Even Eileen's clothes—her silks and satins and brocades—spoke of Oriental bazaars, famous people in famous places, and somehow beaches and sunsets and romance. Rachel wondered how one woman could be so many things, and then Rachel realized Eileen's fragrance was that of hope, promise, a life well lived. Rachel knew that one day she would exude exactly the same scents, exactly the same mystery, and she would have her grandchildren call her ''Rachel''—only Rachel—as they watched her change the ordinary into the extraordinary.

ACTIVITY

List the *smell images* in the vignette.

Sentence Variety: Sentence Combining

Noun Absolutes

Writers need to make sure that their work has *a variety of sentence structures*, which often involves *sentence combining.*

Noun Absolutes are the most sophisticated form of sentence combining; these involve nouns that have *no grammatical function in the sentence* **(that is, not the subject, direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative, or objective of a prepositional phrase)**. *They are nouns that are followed by a present or past participle.*

EXAMPLES:

1. I can destroy a room in seconds, *books thrown* open, *pillows scattered* on the floor, and *clothes lying* hither, thither, and yon.
2. I was at my dressing room mirror, getting ready for school, *makeup laid* out, *clothes spread* all over the world, when all of a sudden a genie squeezed itself out of my perfume bottle.
3. I think of this Alice and know it was not she who named me. Maybe it's because my real mother was old-fashioned, *braids wrapped* around her head, her strong, German *features symbolizing* her inner strength, the same sense of sureness that she wanted to pass down to me.
4. She would—especially in the presence of gentlemen—absentmindedly finger the perfect Tiffany pearls at her neck, her long *finger appreciating* their beauty.

ACTIVITY

1. As a class, analyze the noun absolutes in the sample sentences.
2. Choose one of the following noun absolutes and write a sentence containing it.

   Head lowered

   Tension building

   Ball flying

(Continued on next page.)

Sentence Variety: Noun Absolutes Practice

(Continued from previous page.)

He grabbed her hand and led her out the kitchen door, the screen door____________, the cat____________, and her mother ____________. He had decided that for her sixteenth birthday he'd take her for a ride on his motorcycle. Her mother, dishrag____________, was acting as if they were going to moon and not coming back.

Once on the shiny, chrome machine, she felt powerful. He had been right. They made their way down the driveway, heads____________, her arms____________, and her legs____________. They drove all over town that day, friends____________, the sun____________, and their excitement____________. What a gift he had given her.

ACTIVITY

1. Complete this vignette by adding a *present or past participle* to the nouns, thus creating *noun absolutes*.
2. Try expanding your additions with *phrases following the participles*.

Sentence Variety: Sentence Combining

Participial Phrase

A *participial phrase* is a group of related words that contains a *participle* **(a verb form)** and that acts as an *adjective*. These phrases help make an essay more *sophisticated in its sentence structure*.

EXAMPLES:

1. Are we only out for ourselves, stepping on whatever or whoever is unlucky enough to be in our way?
2. After Matt went to Garner State Park that summer, everything changed. For Matt, no more walking me to every class, carrying my books, and standing by my locker meant that I had been replaced by another girl.
3. I walked myself to class, standing alone at my locker, carried my own books, and talked to no one but my cat at night. I had been dumped, and it hurt.
4. I could perch on my porch, reading the latest mystery, bound up the stairs two at a time, and pole-vault into bed, pulling the covers up over my head.
5. Every since I was old enough to be read to, my love for words has grown, expanding like a balloon, impossible to hold with my two arms, impossible to make these ethereal friends earthbound, impossible not to continue to want more.
6. I was the shy kid, peeking out from behind my mother's skirt, too afraid to talk to strangers, worried what they'd say to me and I to them.

ACTIVITY

1. Identify the participial phrases in the sample sentences.
2. Choose one of the participial phrases and write a different sentence using the same phrase.

(Continued on next page.)

Sentence Variety: Participial Phrase Practice

(Continued from previous page.)

David knew he'd get the job. He was a straight-A student, liked by both teachers and classmates alike. ____________down at his shoes, he realized that he had polished them with such a vengeance that he could actually see his face, just like in dish soap commercials. His starched and pressed Polo shirt, ____________across his chest, ____________a set of muscles that would make any man proud, completed the picture. ____________his hair, he felt confident that his new haircut would impress. He had always wanted to be a lawyer, ____________cases, ____________innocent people, ____________so knowledgeable that his coworkers would look up to him, come to him for answers. ____________in the waiting room, he was thankful that he had gotten a chance to interview for a summer internship. ____________back in his chair, he closed his eyes, ____________ his future life.

ACTIVITY

1. Finish the vignette by adding *present or past participles*.
2. When possible, use participial phrases in addition to the participles themselves.

Sentence Variety: Sentence Combining

Adverb Clause

Adverb clauses are another way to combine sentences that add *voice and variety* to a paper. An adverb clause can begin with such words as **after, although, because, before, if, since, unless, until,** and **when.**

☞ Because *adverb clauses cannot stand on their own*, be sure to *combine an adverb clause with a sentence.*

EXAMPLES:

1. Somehow it came to Kevin. *Before he got off the bus, before he turned his homework around and around in his mind, before his mother told him to get busy*, the idea for Mr. Stevens's paper appeared like magic.

   ☞ Notice that the three clauses provide *repetition for effect.*

2. *If the dishes were dirty*, Carmen came to the rescue, and *if the other children needed attention,* it was she who stroked their hair or bandaged scraped knees or poured tall, frothy glasses of fresh milk for little brothers and sisters still too tiny to reach the top shelf on their own.
3. You were innocent once *when everything was new and exciting*, and you believed the best about everyone *because that was what you were taught.*

ACTIVITY

1. As a class, analyze the adverb clauses in the sample sentences.
2. Using three of the clause signals that are listed in the definition, write three sentences about some aspect of your life, *using adverb clauses.*

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

__________the adrenalin kicked in, Jim was ready for his English test; that is, __________he actually saw the twelve-inch sheaf of papers Miss Baad had tucked under her arm. This wasn't an English test; it was a test of endurance, courage, Jim's manhood. __________Miss Baad was the general of her troops, she could give whatever punishment she wanted __________ she pleased __________ we all keeled over with __________-I-write-another-word-my-hand-will-fall-off looks plastered to our lifeless faces. __________ I was waiting for my booklet of doom, I had a moment to reflect __________ I could ponder just how my confidence had taken a nosedive in three minutes. Maybe it was __________ at heart I was more of a math guy. Or maybe it was __________ I detected a gleam in Miss Baad's eyes, a sort of I'm-going-to-get-all-of-you-__________-you-yell-uncle look. __________ my own special horror was plopped on my desk, I realized that __________ I hadn't studied, maybe I should volunteer for grunt work. Sucking up never hurts.

ACTIVITY

Use the following adverb clause signals to complete the vignette:

After, before, since, until, when, whenever, while, as, because, so that, although, if as if, as long as, in order that, though, unless, wherever.

Sentence Variety: Sentence Combining

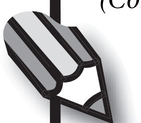
Adjective Clause

An adjective clause **(beginning with who, whom, whose, which, or that)** is yet another way to avoid choppy sentences and assure that a paper's structure is more advanced.

EXAMPLES:

1. At home we often hear pleas from our parents that we answer by ignoring them, turning tail and running.
2. The name *Katharine Ann* slides along—a string of compatible syllables and vowels—and ends up a pleasing combination, an introduction, especially in gentler times. ''And this is Katharine Ann,'' someone would say, and she would delicately offer her gloved hand to be ever so gingerly shaken or grasped or perhaps kissed by a gentleman who knows how to flatter the Katharine Anns of this world.
3. If that isn't enough, the sky can be filled with other worlds—stars, planets, whole universes—that we never dreamed of, that await our examination.
4. Uncle Karl stood waiting at his back door like some imposing giant, a fierce one who would lop off my head if I made one false move.
5. It's the kind of rain that caused you to run for cover to sit under the great spreading oak tree in your backyard and let the drops dance from leaves to branches to your upturned face.

(Continued on next page.)



ACTIVITY

1. Identify the *adjective clauses* in the sample sentence.
2. Write a sentence containing an adjective clause that is about one of the following topics **(parents, a girl or boy, the planet, a relative, or rain)**.

Sentence Variety: Adjective Clause Practice

(Continued from previous page.)

Susie, __________ was a friend of Betty's, __________ knew Sally, __________ had dated Mark, asked Donna to come to the barbecue at Mark's house. Donna couldn't believe it. This house was the house of all houses, one __________ should be on the cover of glossy magazines, one __________ should be on a tour of homes of the rich and famous. The living room, __________ was bigger than most people's entire homes, looked out on an expansive backyard, __________ included a pool, __________ was unlike anything Donna had ever seen.

As Donna stepped through the open French doors, she realized this was no normal barbecue. Waiters, __________ looked like penguins, were offering kids appetizers from silver trays. Donna, __________ had never had an appetizer __________ looked like chefs from all over the world had gotten together to create these miniature marvels, took several, and made her way to the outdoor kitchen, __________ caterers were barbecuing steaks. Donna was thrilled that she knew Susie, __________ was a friend of Betty's, __________ knew Sally, __________ had dated Mark. Suddenly Donna's vocabulary left her, and all she could say was, "Wow!"

ACTIVITY

Add the appropriate *adjective clause signals* to finish the vignette.

Similes as Methods of Voice in a Paragraph

A *simile* is a form of figurative language that compares two dissimilar things, using the word *"like" or "as."*

EXAMPLE:

Who doesn't want to be a superhero in a world bent on destruction? I'm like a bullet traveling at the speed of light when I detect a problem on Earth. I simply change course, enter the fray like a battalion of Green Berets, and the bad guys disappear like Casper the Ghost. Once again I have saved the day. I have to admit, though, that I am selfish at times with my special abilities. When I am tired of snow, for example, I spread my wings, thrust my right arm—strong and confident in its power—into the air and fist-first head off like an airborne locomotive. Hawaii, the French Riviera, the Sea of Cortez, here I come. Sand, surf, sun—even superheroes need a vacation from their I-fight-crime-all-day lives. Maybe the best of all is the beauty. Normal humans have a limited view of the sky. I *become* the heavens, I *am* the billowy clouds, I converse with the birds. "It's a bird! It's a plane! It's superhero!" my mortal friends never tire of exclaiming. I always smile to myself and am off to yet another destination.

ACTIVITY

List all the *similes* that the paragraph uses.

Similes as Practice in Developing Voice

EXAMPLES:

1. That Albert was a smart cookie, quiet unless you got him going on something and then he was like some steam engine chugging along, speeding faster and faster until he was near to bursting with everything he'd been studying.
2. Louise—Slim we called her—would hold Harold's hand and look into his eyes like he was one of the wonders of the world.
3. I lower myself into the wooden seat of the swing, its rough plank as familiar as my own skin.
4. Carolyn was shy, so when the teacher called on her to read in front of the class, she moved slowly, carefully, as if bits of her might actually fall off or come undone, and when she finally was set, she held onto the edge of the desk as if it were a lifeboat and she was sinking.
5. He was like a forest fire, spreading equations and theories and probabilities and variables fast and furiously, searing his knowledge straight into the blazing red "A+" that Mr. Burns made in the grade book.

ACTIVITY

1. Identify the similes in each sentence.
2. Choose one of the similes and use it in a five-minute Quick Write, adding any others of your own.

Snapshot Poem

A snapshot poem is free verse that gives a *"brief picture" without much action.*

Example #1:

Hidden

Beneath
the waistcoat
a note
folded in two
and once again,
edges frayed
and blackened
by touch,
at least once a
day fingers
secretly slipping
between starched shirt
and wool
to rest against
what's left
of love

Example #2:

The drive to Padre
on a hot, dry day
Dad the serious
eyes-glued-to-road
driver
rest of family
hopeful, yearning
necks craned
for first glimpse
of surf
A long, straight, two-lane
road ahead,
ten eyes fixed left
waves, froth
Screeching of tires
fully clothed mother
water-bound now
us seconds behind
all except Dad
face red, distorted
mutterings
of sand
in his shoes

☞ The title is actually the first line of the poem.

ACTIVITY

Write five words to give to a neighbor, who will use those words to help form a snapshot poem.

Structure Rubric for One-Paragraph Essay

[Topic Sentence] Brackets

Transition Words or Phrases Circled	First Main Point Underlined and Numbered
Transition Words or Phrases Circled	Second Main Point Underlined and Numbered
Transition Words or Phrases Circled	Third Main Point Underlined and Numbered

[Concluding Sentence] Brackets

1. All markings need to be made in colored ink on rough and final.
2. If students can't mark the paragraph according to structure, the paper needs to be *revised to fit the format.*
3. *Elaboration* **(See Methods of Elaboration Examples)** and Smiley-Face Tricks **(Voice)** need to come after each main point, explaining—giving support to—that reason. These should be marked according to type.
4. *Peer editing* can occur by having the partner fill in a *Smiley-Face Rubric* (listing the best example of each trick) for the writer's paper, which the writer can then *transfer to his or her final draft* **(for example, Magic Three, Repetition for Effect, and so on)**.

5. Four people can fill in the *list the Methods of Elaboration used by four different writers* (by moving to their papers, as in Chairs) to help the writer realize what methods were used and which should *perhaps be added to a revised copy.*
6. *All drafts, rubrics, and peer responses* should be stapled *behind the final copy.*

ACTIVITY

Mark your last one-paragraph essay according to the structure rubric.

Subjunctive Mood of Verbs

The subjunctive mood is used to express a *wish* or something *contrary to fact.* (Incorrect = I wish I was rich. Correct = I wish I were rich.)

EXAMPLE:

> "If, if, if," Sarah daydreams right in the middle of English class. If I was a famous singer, I wouldn't need to know the parts of speech. My words would ring out loudly and clearly and be the song in everyone's head. If I was an heiress, no one would dare question me about existentialism or transcendentalism. We would sunbathe on my yacht, our heads as empty as the cloudless blue sky. If I was a model, dangling modifiers could dangle away as long as my body didn't follow suit. My only worry would be that no flab or excess anything flapped in the wind. "If, if, if," Sarah is thinking when Mrs. Hornby says, "Sarah, if perchance you were to answer this question, what might you say?"

ACTIVITY

Correct all the errors in *subjunctive mood.*

Summary

A summary presents the substance of a work in *condensed form*, such as the *beginning, middle,* and *end.*

EXAMPLE:

Pete felt guilt wash over his entire body—from the tips of his toes to the top of his spiked red hair. Even his face was following suit, turning at least twelve shades of red in two short I-shouldn't-have-done-that-and-now-I'll-be-in-trouble minutes. It wasn't a crime that would make the six o'clock news or the headlines of the town's newspaper, not even one that would warrant a visit from the police. The truth—plain and simple—was that when his friend, Joey, had gone back to his room to get his bat and baseball, Pete had opened Mrs. Kramer's cookie jar, stuck his hand in, pulled out a freshly baked chocolate-chip cookie, and wolfed it down in one bite. It was still stealing in his mother's book, and it was his mother's book that counted. When Joey returned, Pete had no alternative but to confess. Joey just laughed and said that his mother had baked the cookies for the boys in the first place.

ACTIVITY

Summarize the vignette in three sentences: beginning, middle, and end.

Symbol

A symbol is an object that represents something else because it brings an association to the reader's mind.

EXAMPLE:

Mike said he remembered it vividly, the shiny red bike he had gotten when he was six, with tassels on the handlebars that would fly up as he sped around the neighborhood, tooting his new horn, and glowing after dark with the iridescent patches his mom had used to decorate both bumpers and the hubs of his spokes. The bike was his freedom and he remembered. Then there was the shotgun from his granddaddy that Mike had received when he was ten. Even then Mike had realized that this single object was his permission to be a man, to be grown-up enough to be trusted with life and death.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Brainstorm *five symbols* in your life and what they represent.
2. Write a paragraph using your favorite, explaining the meaning the object holds for you.

Thank-You Note

A *thank-you note* is written after receiving a gift or after someone has done something special for a person. The *form* follows that of a friendly letter.

645 Magnolia Ave.
Orlando, FL __________
January 2,__________

Dear Aunt Gertrude,

Do you have a crystal ball or what? Imagine my surprise when I opened my Christmas gift and found *The Complete Set of Shakespeare's Works*! It's as if you read my mind—or at least my teacher's. Guess who will be appointed permanent pet of the entire English faculty now? It was such a generous gift that it will provide reading material through high school, college, graduate school, and probably till my eyes give out from the pleasure of it all. You really shouldn't have, and I mean that sincerely.

Next year, please promise me that you'll be more conservative. I know you'll get me something so maybe just a little makeup or a small item of clothing or some cologne. In fact, because you're so busy, I'll be sure to send you a list—maybe even marked in a catalogue—of just a couple "stuffers" so that my name can be one that you can draw a line through come shopping time.

Again, Aunt Gertrude, all I can say is "Oh Boy!"

Your niece,

Samantha

ACTIVITY

1. This is obviously a *spoof* on a thank-you note. Quote several lines that indicate the *author's tone.*
2. Do a five-minute Quick Write in either a serious or a humorous tone.

Theme: Building Themes into Essays

If writers can build in a *universal theme* or two into their essays, the work is seen as *more advanced, having an even greater purpose.*

EXAMPLES:

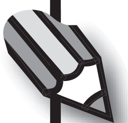
1. *Certainty makes men out of boys.* (Conclusion sentence about strength as one aspect of riding bikes in an expository essay.) (The statement applies to more than bike riding; it could be applied to many areas of life.)
2. *Superheroes or not, we just might learn a thing or two from this man who has lived a lifetime, and we just might learn something about ourselves as well.* (Conclusion sentence of third body of a persuasive essay about the world needing kindness.) (The point is applicable to more than just being kind to elderly people. Readers can assume that practicing good deeds can have an impact not just on the recipient but on the one who is giving of himself or herself.)
3. *There are plenty of things I can do if only someone would listen.* (A concluding sentence for an elementary expository paper.) (The importance of listening is inherent in the assurance that there are indeed things that the narrator can do.)

ACTIVITY

Choose one of the themes and write three main points the essay could include.

Themes: Works Built Around a Theme

About once a week Grandpa and I would play croquet. Oh, not normal croquet that conjures up visions of green manicured lawns, ladies in long white skirts, saddle shoes, and straw hats, men smoking pipes and discussing stock options. No, Grandpa and I would go for my own version of the game. Gramps always said, ''Stick with it, kid. Make people play by your rules all your life. You'll be a winner then. Nothing will every stop you.'' So since he had said this, he was committed to endless games over rocky terrain, around one-hundred-year-old pine trees, under low-hanging mimosa branches wherever I'd put wickets that would challenge even the most ardent sports fan. Grandpa would send his ball sailing, thinking it would be smooth flying to wicket #26. Yes, I added more wickets—more to think about, I always said—and wham! The ball would hit the windmill Grandpa had made for Mama, the same windmill I had strategically placed between wickets #22 and #23. Foiled again, Pops, I would think as I studied my shot that would ricochet off the oak, past the windmill, and straight through the hoop. ''Victory again!'' ''Score one for the kid!'' It was fun in those days, Grandpa and me playing over, under, and around—anywhere and everywhere, but always by my rules.



ACTIVITY

What do you think the theme is that applies to life in general?

Transitions: More Sophisticated Methods

Persuasive Essay

Transitions that do more than announce another topic are a mark of an exemplary writer. Tying one paragraph to another in such a way that reminds the reader of the previous topic is a type of *voice*.

EXAMPLE PAPER #1:

Thesis: If I had my own special place, I could stay out of everyone's way, learn the tricks of home ownership, and have a place for my imagination to grow.

First Body Topic Sentence: One adage **(T.W.)** most kids learn is that they should be seen and not heard. With my own space, my infamous chatter would be silenced, and I'd be invisible as well.

Second Body Topic Sentence: Besides the privacy **(T.P.)**, Mom and Dad, I'd learn just what it's like to take care of a house.

Third Body Topic Sentence: If having your own space and watching the aesthetic appreciation and mechanical prowess of your daughter grow aren't enough to convince you both **(T.P.)**, then think of my budding imagination.

Restatement of Thesis: Thanks to you, Mom and Dad, we all have our own special space, I finally know what to do with a wrench, and my imagination is in full bloom—all because of my Victorian playhouse.

ACTIVITY

How do the transitions in the second and third bodies link the other paragraphs?

Transitions: More Sophisticated Methods

Expository Essay

EXAMPLE:

Thesis: Porches are those rarities in life that let us appreciate nature, relax with absolutely no agenda, and provide a place for us to play.

First Body Topic Sentence: One **T.W.** of the wonders of porches is that they let us breathe.

Second Body Topic Sentence: For those of us who have never experienced the luxuries a porch has to offer **(T.P.)**, the indisputable fact that it makes for a perfect place to nap can be quite alluring.

Third Body Topic Sentence: After we have become familiar with the more tranquil properties of a porch **(T.P.)**, its more active possibilities will make themselves known.

Restatement of Thesis: It is our turn as well, though, to call a porch our own, where we can have a front-row seat to all that nature offers, where we can relax from the stress of modern-day life, and where—when we are ready—we can return to activities slowly at our own pace as porches would have us do.

ACTIVITY

Being sure to link the bodies together, rewrite the transition phrases for the second and third bodies in your own words.

Verb Tense Shift

Writers should never shift verb tenses without reason.

EXAMPLE:

He saw them coming and tries desperately to hide. They have not seen him yet; he is sure of that. That simple fact allowed him to consider his options and perhaps even to experiment.

"Bushes," he thought, and like some super-powered superhero he jumps behind a nearby hedge. Even stretching his six-foot frame flat out on his back, corpse-like, or face-down, like a criminal ready to be cuffed, affords him no advantage. They will see. He knew it.

"Mrs. Jones's front porch, behind the wicker rocker!" his mind screams at him. He bounded up six stairs—couldn't help counting—and crouches like a turtle in its shell.

"Hi Ethan," Mrs. Jones greets him as she opened the front door, newspaper and tea cup in tow.

As he raced back to the sidewalk to grab his backpack, there they are, almost face-to-face with him. If music were playing, he and Heather can be dance partners.

"Ethan, I thought I saw you. I want you to meet Cynthia, my cousin, your blind date."

Ethan freezes as he laid eyes on the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

ACTIVITY

1. Read the piece, making all the verbs *present tense.*
2. Now read the vignette in *past tense.*

Vocabulary: I Don't Think So

EXAMPLE #1:

Sure, I'll go around saying, "She's the *eponymous* fashion designer of our time." Or maybe I'll try, "Man what a fine group! They're the *eponymous* artists." Or how about, "Valedictorians are to be praised as the *eponymous* students of their entire classes." Yeah, I'll be saying all that when the proverbial pigs fly—*eponymous* pigs, that is.

EXAMPLE #2:

Taciturn isn't high on my list of must-have words. Unless I'm taking the SAT or some big bad vocabulary test in Mr. Biddle's English class, I'd just say, "Hey, what's up? Why are you so quiet?" If I said "taciturn" to the wrong person, I might just get pummeled. Now there's a word I'll use.

EXAMPLE #3:

"I can detect that your argument is a bit *specious*, don't you think, old chap?" Yeah, I'll just throw that into my conversation every chance I get. "I have to interrupt you, sir, but your syllogistic reasoning, while seeming quite logical, is *specious* in its minor premise." Sounds just like me.

ACTIVITY

Choose a word from your vocabulary list that you think *you would never use* and write at least fifty words telling why or giving an example of how you would sound if you did use the word.

Vocabulary: Which Word?

EXAMPLE:

Girls are like aliens; they speak a whole different language. Take Beth. I know for a fact that she'd use *promenade* every chance she'd get. She's always got her nose stuck in a book, and I'm sure her historical characters are *promenading* all over the place. "Take my hand, Rebecca," Trenton Hainsworth III would say, "and we'll take a little *promenade* around the estate." Or maybe those characters in Beth's books aren't waiting for an invitation. They're beginning their fancy balls with guests marching, *promenading,* to some old boring classical music. Or maybe Beth's so square she's into square dancing, and she's *promenading* with her partner. Girls are alien. I promise.

ACTIVITY

From your list of vocabulary words, write a paragraph, giving *three instances* of the word being used. Make sure that your work has *voice* as well as *structure.*

Vocabulary: What If?

EXAMPLE:

I know I'd hear *"obstreperous"* time and time again during my mischievous days. It would start in the early morning, when I always give our cat Winkie a gentle yank on his tail, sending him meowing to Mom like the whiny toad that he is, and me yelling at the top of my lungs, "Here, Kitty, Kitty! What's wrong? Something got you by the tail?" **(Humor)**

"Mr. Kenny *Obstreperous* Smith," (I hate it when she uses my whole name because that always means I'm in a whole lot of trouble) "get in here right now, eat your breakfast, and quiet down. And " (I can always feel when a big 'and' is coming) "you owe Winkie an apology."

Apologize to a cat? If I didn't know better, I'd say Mom was getting senile.

My day would continue along the *obstreperous* lines when I'd throw a spitball or two in Mrs. Field's math class and take a teensy tiny nap—snoring as loudly as possible—in Mr. Davis's history class.

"Mr. Kenny *Obstreperous* Smith . . ."

ACTIVITY

Choose one of your vocabulary words that you think you will *use often in your life*. Write a ten-minute Quick Write, in which you make it clear that this word suits you. You must include at least one *writing trick* and label both it and the vocabulary word.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

JB JOSSEY-BASS TEACHER

With Easy-to-Copy, Lay-Flat Pages

Writing Mini-Lessons That Won't Mean More Grading!

The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day offers 180+ ready-to-use, reproducible activities that are designed to enhance writing skills of all secondary students. Written for teachers in grades 6–12, the book's classroom-tested activities are designed so that teachers aren't required to do any extra grading. Partnering techniques along with new oral assessments and peer-editing strategies not only reduce teacher paper load but provide immediate feedback for students. *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day* is filled with writing prompts and sample passages written in student-friendly language that connect abstract literary concepts to students' own lives. In addition, the engaging examples serve as models to encourage students to create their own Quick Writes.

Praise for *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day*

"The most difficult area to teach in language arts is writing, and this text now makes it easier—it will become a teacher's best friend! The book is the perfect marriage to the writer's workshop lesson plan model, giving specific examples of writing for each necessary skill to be taught, and will surely enhance and support your mini-lessons. Implementing these activities will help both the student and teacher grow as writers. In 33 years of teaching language arts, I've never seen anything like it!"
—**Donna Kortvelesy**, MS, NBCT, professional development specialist, Millville Public Schools, Millville, New Jersey

"Anytime I see a book by Mary Ellen Ledbetter, I grab hold of several copies for use in my classrooms and trainings. Teachers beg for them! In *The Writing Teacher's Activity-a-Day*, she has taken the objectives that are so hard for students to grasp and for educators to teach and has put together an easy-to-read, easy-to-teach book of amazing activities for everyday use."
—**Janet Coleman**, Ed. D., educational consultant and trainer, Fort Worth, Texas

MARY ELLEN LEDBETTER, M.A., is a noted presenter and educational consultant specializing in boosting language arts skills in K–12 students. She has extensive teaching experience in public schools as well as at the college level. Her previous books include *Ready-To-Use English Workshop Activities* and *Writing Portfolio Activities Kit*, both from Jossey-Bass, and she is the author of number of popular self-published works including *Something for Every Day*, *All About Me*, and *You Say—I Say*.

EDUCATION

$19.95 U.S. | $23.95 Canada

ISBN 978-0-470-46132-7

51995

9 780470 461327

www.josseybass.com

JOSSEY-BASS™
An Imprint of
WILEY

Cover design by Michael Cook